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THE TIMES OF INDIA

INCLUDES 6 PAGES OF BANGALORE TIMES AND *6 PAGES OF EDUCATION TIMES (*CITY AREAS ONLY)

INDIA'S LARGEST ENGLISH NEWSPAPER

Ajit Agarkar to continue as chairman of senior selection committee after cricket board decides to renew his contract for **one more year**, keeping an eye on 2027 ODI World Cup, P 15

Senior Cabinet ministers rally around UK PM Keir Starmer, whose leadership is teetering over decision to give Britain's most important diplomatic job to Peter Mandelson, a friend of Epstein, P 12

Humanoid robot that won a half-marathon race for robots in Beijing breaks human world record (about 57 minutes). Made by a Chinese smartphone maker, it completed 21km race in 50 minutes & 26 secs, P 12

Priyansh Arya (in pic) and Cooper Connolly slam 93 and 87, respectively, as Punjab Kings post an insurmountable 254 for 7, **beat Lucknow Super Giants by 54 runs in IPL match**, P 15

8 kids dead in mass shooting in Louisiana

Eight children, aged 1-14, were killed in a mass shooting on Sunday in Shreveport, Louisiana. The suspected gunman was later fatally shot by police during a vehicle chase, local authorities said. Police said that some of the children were related to the suspected gunman, and that the shootings occurred in three residences. The shooting occurred just after 6am and is considered a domestic disturbance, cops said. P 12

▶ 5 wounded in shooting near Univ of Iowa, P 12

IN THE COURTS

➤ Aligarh court convicts and **sentences 3 men to life** for murder of finance company employee after **testimony of his 6-yr-old daughter** | P 7

➤ Bombay high court tells Centre to decide on **Padma Vibhushan for** India's 1st individual Olympic medallist **Khashaba Jadhav** | P 7

Vance, Trump's son-in-law to be back in Pak for Iran talks

No Decision On Sending Team, Says Tehran

Chidanand Rajghatta | TNN

Washington: A high-level US team is heading back to Pakistan on Monday for a second round of talks with Iran amid renewed threats by President Donald Trump that he will destroy every bridge and every power plant if Tehran does not make a deal.

FULL COVERAGE: P 10 & 12

Iran has not confirmed that its team will return for the talks, suggesting that it will not do so until the US navy lifts its blockade of Hormuz and agrees to negotiate on other demands such as lifting of sanctions, unfreezing its frozen assets, and a permanent end to war. Even though Trump announced the US visit, Iran was still ascertaining from Pakistan, whose Army chief Asim Munir made an apparently fruitless three-day visit to Tehran last week, if its red lines would be respected.

For that matter, there was confusion in Washington too over the composition of the US team. Trump initially said vice-president JD Vance would not be leading the team consisting of his special envoy Steve Witkoff and his son-in-law Jared Kushner, but the White House later said Vance would be going.

▶ Iran prez on US, P 12

IRAN SAYS IT WON'T CEDE URANIUM

➤ 'Who is he': Iran President Masoud **Pezeshkian says Donald Trump has no justification** to deprive his country of its nuclear rights

➤ Deputy foreign minister Saeed Khatibzadeh says Iran will not hand over its enriched uranium to US, **rejects claims by American president**

➤ Iran's foreign ministry says **US naval blockade** on its ports is a violation of the ceasefire and **'unlawful, criminal'**

➤ **Israeli military publishes map** of its new deployment

Red Crescent rescuers train at their camp in Tehran Sunday

line inside Lebanon, **bringing dozens of mostly abandoned villages under its control**, days after ceasefire took effect

'You gave me clearance, now you're firing'

The distress call from the captain of Indian-flagged oil tanker Sanmar Herald captured vividly the confusion that ensued during the firing in Strait of Hormuz on Saturday, **reports Dipak Dash**.

"Iranian navy, Iranian navy. I will alter to starboard and go back, don't fire... Sepah Navy, you gave me clearance. My name is second on your list. You are firing now, let me turn back," the captain can be heard pleading in the over-two-minute audio.

Another video clip of the radio communications captured and shared on social media shows that cargo ship Bhagya Laxmi was approaching the strait from UAE waters when it was intercepted. P 7

23 dead, 6 injured in massive blast at TN firecracker unit

Owner On The Run, Licence May Be Cancelled

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

PTI

Rescue personnel inspect the site of the explosion at Kattanarpatti village in Tamil Nadu's Virudhunagar district on Sunday

Virudhunagar: A powerful explosion killed 23 workers and injured six at a firecracker factory in Kattanarpatti village Sunday afternoon, underscoring a long history of fatal blasts in Virudhunagar district of Tamil Nadu — part of India's main fireworks manufacturing belt centred around Sivakasi.

The blast struck around 3.20pm at Muthuramlingapuram panchayat, roughly 520km southwest of Chennai, when 36 workers were handling firecracker chemicals. Investigators said friction of chemicals likely triggered the explosion, flattening at least four sheds. Proximity of a chemical storage room amplified impact. Villagers reported hearing the blast several km away. Witnesses described a plume of white fumes rising over 50ft. Fire and rescue teams from Sattur, Virudhunagar town and Sivakasi battled flames and searched debris. Injured workers were taken to Virudhunagar govt hospital, many with critical burns.

Officials said the unit, Vanaja Fireworks, held a licence but was operating on a Sunday in violation of rules. "The factory was not supposed to function on a Sunday. We will initiate stern action after a detailed inquiry," said district collector NO Sukhaputra, adding the licence would be cancelled. Investigators are probing whether safety norms were breached.

Preliminary findings suggest the licence was obtained in the name of Eswari, wife of Muthuramalingam, a former panchayat president, who is on the run.

▶ 4 special teams, P 14

Man kills his twin daughters in Kanpur

A 48-year-old businessman allegedly strangled his 11-year-old twin daughters and slit their throats after sedating them by mixing sleeping pills into their food in Kanpur's Kidwai Nagar area early Sunday. The accused, Shashi Ranjan Mishra, then called police and confessed. His six-year-old son was asleep with his mother in another room. TNN

Govt proposes Dinesh Trivedi as B'desh envoy

India has proposed the name of BJP's Dinesh Trivedi as the next high commissioner to Bangladesh. Sources said Dhaka's approval is awaited for what would be a rare political appointment in the neighbourhood. He has served multiple terms as MP and was also railway minister. P 7

K'taka govt eyes ₹120cr in sludge sale

Karnataka cabinet has approved a proposal to sell 200 tonnes of sludge generated by Bengaluru every day for the production of biogas, **reports Sandeep Moudgal**. The project may bring in Rs 120 crore, partially easing the burden on state exchequer. P 6

Largest solo women group leaves for Haj

As the first contingent of pilgrims left for Haj to Saudi Arabia on Saturday, in a first since since 2018 policy change, 5,446 Muslim women will be travelling without Mehram (male companion). Kerala leads again with 4,477 women in this category. P 7

New maintenance policy for BDA flats

Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) will introduce a new maintenance policy for its apartment projects from next month, primarily for upcoming apartment projects, **reports Vindhya Pabolu**. P 3

Rohith Vemula bill prohibits probing family backgrounds

State govt has listed 30 discriminatory actions in higher educational institutions that will attract penal provisions under the Rohith Vemula Bill, 2026, **reports Sandeep Moudgal**. The bill, accessed by TOI, prohibits questions probing their social background or family occupation in ways that disadvantage or humiliate them, instead of limiting enquiries to academic qualifications or subject-related competencies, during admission processes or interviews.

This is in addition to the more commonly heard discriminatory actions of compelling them to vacate hostels, drop out of college due to caste slurs, not allowing their participation in classrooms or academic engagements and segregating them. P 6

Tata Trusts seeks to tweak bar on non-Zoroastrians for charity trust

Tata Trusts is moving the charity commissioner to dismantle a century-old provision barring non-Zoroastrians from serving as trustees of the Bai Hirabai Jamsetji Tata Navsari Charitable Institution, **reports Reeba Zachariah**.

The decision was taken at Friday's board meet. Tata Trusts said trustees decided to seek alteration of restrictive clauses "to correct anomalies in the Bai Hirabai trust deed and align it with the values that Tata Trusts have always epitomised".

The move follows a challenge by Mehli Mistry, an ex-trustee who petitioned the commissioner arguing the 1923 trust deed required all trustees to be practising Zoroastrians with permanent residence in Mumbai, conditions he said two sitting trustees didn't meet. P 13

GOA GIRL IS MISS INDIA WORLD

Goa's Sadhvi Sail (centre), daughter of Karwar MLA Satish Sail, was crowned Femina Miss India World 2026. Maharashtra's Rajnandini Pawar (right) Femina Miss India 2026 - 1st Runner-Up, and Jammu & Kashmir's Sree Advaita (left) Femina Miss India 2026 - 2nd Runner-Up at finale of KIIT Bhubaneswar presents 61st Femina Miss India co-powered by Rajnigandha Pearls on Saturday | Full Coverage, P 8 & Bangalore Times

Amid uncertainty, India & Korea must work jointly as global leaders: Prez Lee

Sachin Parashar & Alpyu Singh

As he arrived in India for a state visit, South Korean President Lee Jae-myung said the two countries must work closely as emerging global leaders amid heightened geopolitical uncertainty, and that they can give a new direction to multilateralism when it's faced with mounting challenges.

In an exclusive interview to **TOI**, Lee said while Korea exemplified remarkable economic growth under the multilateral trading system, India stood well placed to shape new global rules with its economic scale and dynamism.

On China's dominance in critical minerals, Lee said reducing excessive dependence on a single country was directly linked to the economic security of India and South Korea. On the Hormuz crisis, Lee said Korea will work together with India to ensure freedom of navigation in the key energy waterway.

On defence collaboration, he said Seoul will fully back India's "independent production" of defence equipment, while exploring joint tech development and co-production.

FULL Q&A: P 11

TMC will get 'maha-punishment' from mothers and sisters: Modi

Kolkata: PM Narendra Modi sharpened his attack on Trinamool Congress, declaring in rallies across Bengal that "mothers and sisters" would punish it for stymying the women's reservation bill and urging voters to deliver "maha-punishment" to what he called "maha-jungleraj", **reports Rohit Khanna.**

Addressing four rallies in six hours Sunday — Bankura's Barjora, Purulia, Jhargram and Midnapore — before the April 23 phase of the assembly polls, Modi accused TMC and Congress of "conspiring" against women. "Women's welfare is Modi's guarantee," he said, alleging TMC is "maa virodhi (opposed to mothers)".

▶ TN's IG (Intel) replaced; 2 Bengal SDPOs moved, P 9

▶ Welfare promises, P 14

PM Modi offers jhalmuri to children at a roadside shop during a break between election rallies, in Jhargram on Sunday

37% of our LS MPs are women: Mamata

Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee called the PM's "address to the nation" an election speech. "Not 33%, but 37% of our MPs in LS are women. In RS, 46% of our MPs are women. You (BJP) give tickets to very few women." P 14

ED raids Kolkata DCP, arrests bizman

ED on Sunday raided the residence of a Kolkata Police DCP (Spl Branch), Shantanu Sinha, and arrested a businessman in a laundering probe linked to an alleged syndicate involved in illegal land deals and extortion. P 9

US nat'l stopped for satphone-like device in J&K, let off after checks

New Delhi/Srinagar: Visiting US national Jeffrey Scott, who was stopped at Srinagar airport after a satellite phone-like device was detected in his baggage — a prima facie violation of provisions of the Indian Telegraph Act — was allowed to fly out of the Valley after it became clear that he had carried the device as a navigational aid for his trekking trips, unaware that its possession and use were banned in India, **report Bharti Jain & Naseer Ganai.**

Sources said the device is commonly used by trekkers in the US, where it is not banned, as a satellite communicator to navigate remote areas without any cellular coverage.

▶ Fly from Srinagar, P 14

8, including 2 children, drown in Cauvery in Mys district; 2 critical

Mysuru: Eight people, including two children, drowned in Cauvery in two separate incidents 40km apart in Mysuru district Sunday afternoon. In the first incident, a group of eight people attended Hazrat Khadar Lingavalli Urs near KR Nagar. Later, they went for a swim in the river, during which six drowned near Arkeshwara Swamy Temple.

Two of the victims were from Bengaluru. Two others are in critical condition.

Calling the incident 'heartbreaking', chief minister Siddaramaiah announced a compensation of Rs 5 lakh each to the families of the deceased. In the second incident, the two victims had gone for a swim when they drowned at Ranigate in Periyapatna. TNN

▶ Treatment in hosp, P 6

Gzb man accused of rape & murder of niece, 4, killed in encounter

Avishek.Kumar
@timesofindia.com

Ghaziabad: A man wanted for the rape and murder of his four-year-old niece was killed in a police encounter in Teela Mod on Sunday, barely a day after the reward on his arrest was doubled from Rs 25,000 to Rs 50,000.

The gunfight, police said, broke out when a crime branch-SWAT team moved in to intercept the accused following specific information on his location.

The encounter comes close on the heels of the Supreme Court pulling up Ghaziabad police over its handling of another rape-murder case. The apex court had described the response of police and two private hospitals in the city as "indifferent, inhuman, and insensitive".

The man killed in the Teela Mod encounter was a Muzaffarnagar resident known by multiple aliases, police said. Since he was the child's uncle, **TOI** is withholding his name.

▶ 2 cops hurt in firing, P 9

Maha NGO chief held for sex abuse, religious coercion

Police arrested the president of an NGO after an FIR accused him of sexual abuse, religious coercion, defamation and cyberstalking of women working with his organisation in northwest Nagpur, officials said Sunday. The case against Riyaz Fazil Qazi was registered at Mankapur police station around 10pm Saturday under multiple provisions of BNS. P 14

CBI arrests DGCA dy DG, pvt co exec for ₹2.5L bribery

CBI has arrested Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) deputy DG Mudavath Devula and a private sector executive during a trap operation in south Delhi in connection with a bribery case pertaining to acquisition of drones, **reports Rajshekhar Jha**.

The other accused, CBI said, was Bharat Mathur, a senior vice-president at Reliance Industries Ltd. Devula allegedly asked Mathur to deliver illegal gratification at Essex Farms by April 18 evening. Tipped off by a source, CBI laid a trap and they were arrested in a bribery case of Rs 2.5 lakh.

RIL said that Mathur was engaged as a consultant, and denied knowing of any "transaction involving him" in this case.

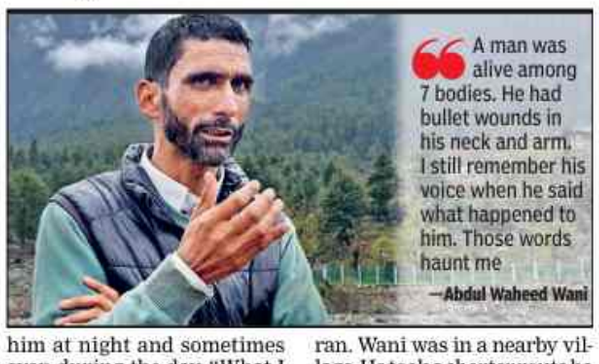
▶ Got info in March, P 14

'What I saw that day I pray no one should ever see': Ponywallah with a wish to forget

Naseer Ganai & Ajay Sura

Pahalgam: His phone rings often. As president of one of Pahalgam's largest ponywallah associations, Abdul Waheed Wani, 39, is rarely out of demand. But keeping himself busy is also one way to push away memories that still haunt him.

Pahalgam
ONE YEAR & LATER



Wani was among the first to reach Baisaran valley after the April 22 terrorist attack in which 26 tourists, including a local ponywallah, were killed and 17 others wounded. What he saw there, returns to him at night and sometimes even during the day. "What I saw that day I pray no one should ever see," he says.

It was afternoon of April 22 when he received a call from police saying something untoward had happened in Baisaran. Wani was in a nearby village. He took a shorter route he knew well and reached before police. "I saw a woman crying, a child crying. Bodies were lying scattered," Wani says. His brother-in-law, Sajad, was with him. "For a moment, I felt I would not make it back after seeing all this." He ran to one of the makeshift shops that had been abandoned and picked up a bottle of water and returned to the woman.

▶ They had head shots, P 8

Tourist arrivals in town down to half

Tourist arrivals in Pahalgam have fallen sharply since the attack. From Jan to April 2025, 4.6 lakh tourists visited the scenic hill town, while this year, the number is just 2.5 lakh, a drop of 45%. Annual footfall too has dipped against 12-15 lakh in previous years. P 8

'SC & HC orders binding beyond territorial limits'

Bengaluru: Karnataka HC has said orders of **constitutional courts** (of Supreme Court and high courts) are binding on all executive and statutory authorities even outside the territorial limits of the issuing court.

The court made the observation, directing the state department of stamps and registration as well as the jurisdictional sub-registrars to give effect to directions issued by the Bombay high court in a case involving sale deeds and agreements executed by managing director of Electrex (India) in Bengaluru. TNN

▶ ₹25k cost imposed, P 6

KRS dam level slips below 100ft; no immediate threat to water supply

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mandya: With early-summer heatwave tightening its grip, water level at Krishnaraja Sagara reservoir — lifeline of Old Mysuru region, including Bengaluru — has slipped below the 100-ft mark.

Though there's no immediate threat to water supply in the next month and a half, authorities are exercising caution and have advised the farming community against opting for water-intensive crops.

▶ Forget groundwater, tap surface runoff: Expert, P 4

Water level at KRS, which has a maximum of 124.8ft, now stands at 99.4ft. On paper, water can be pumped out for agricultural purposes till it reaches 60ft and for drinking water till it drops to 50ft. But the bigger question is the inflow-outflow mismatch. While daily inflow is at 80 cusecs, outflow tops 4,300 cusecs. Plus, rising temperatures mean higher evaporation losses.

Current water level at Krishnaraja Sagara reservoir stands at 99.4ft. Water dept officials said citizens should use water judiciously

▶ No crisis for now, P 6

Bangalore Times

Meet the winners of Miss India 2026

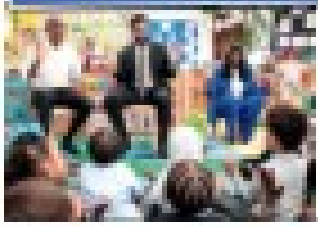
SREE ADVAITA

SABHIVI SAIL

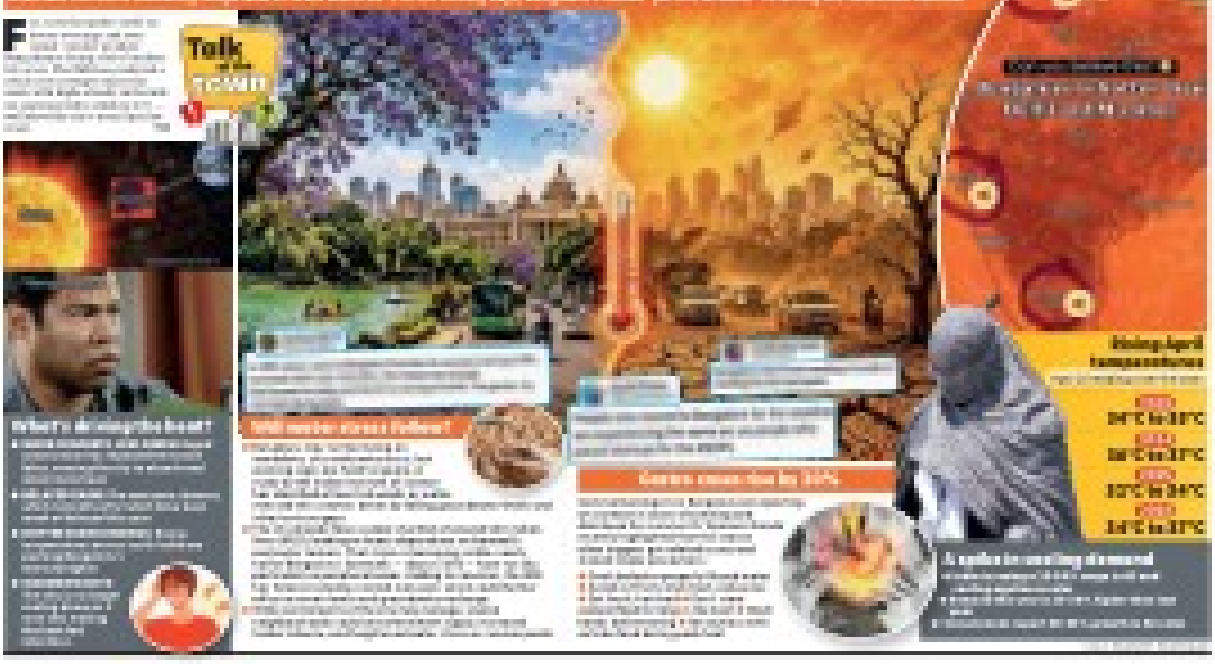
RAJNANDINI PAWAR

Shah Rukh Khan is like a godfather to me: Anirudh

OBAMA ROLLS INTO NYC TALKS WITH WHEELS ON THE BUS



Bengaluru, you're too hot to handle



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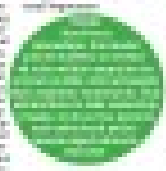
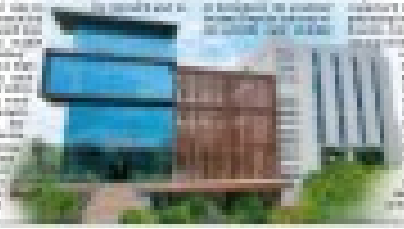
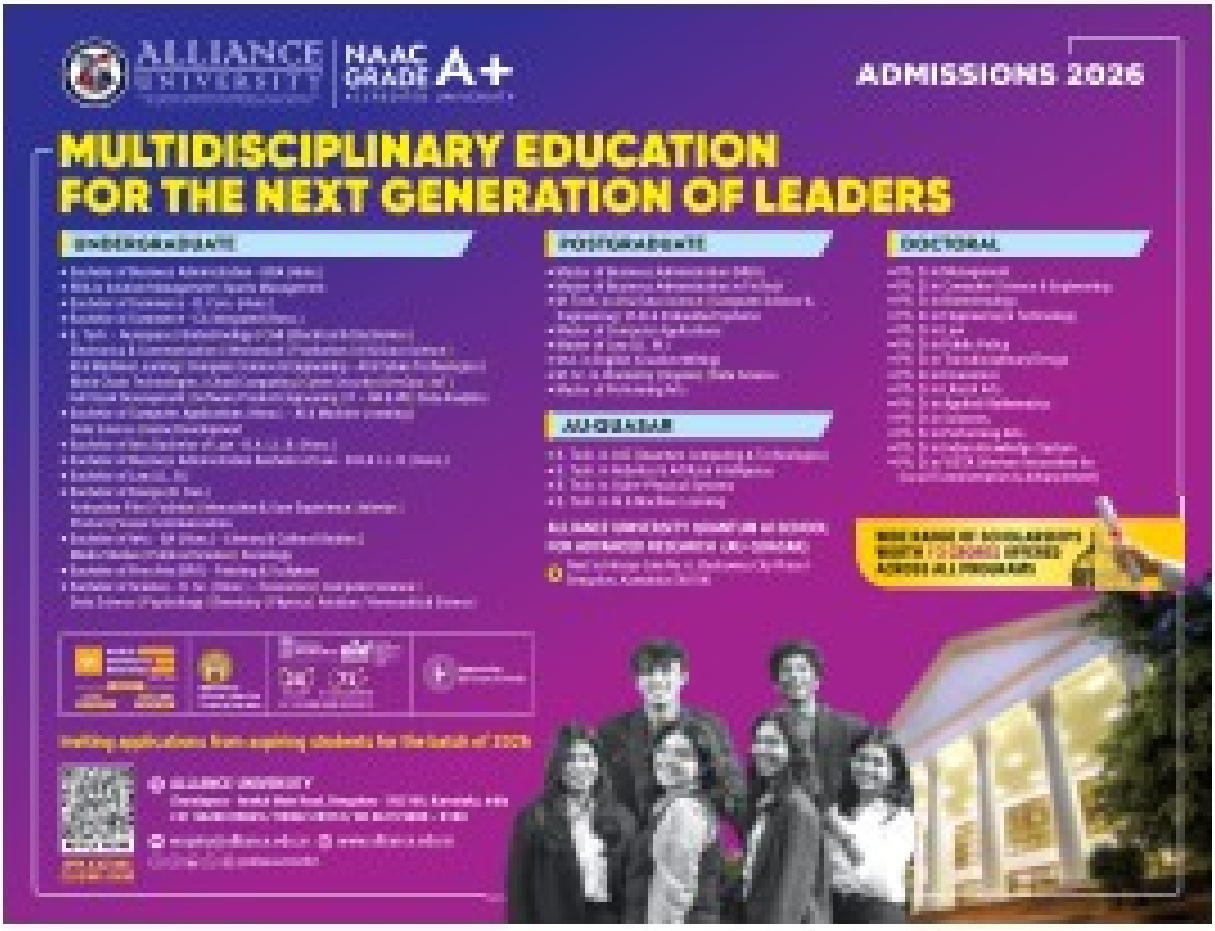
THE PATH TO EXCELLENCE

NMC mandates MBBS fees only for 4.5 years, not full course duration

Future of management education will be defined by depth, not scale



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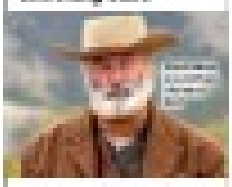
Alec Baldwin to face civil trial in Rust shooting case



My every breath misses you: Zeenat remembers Asha

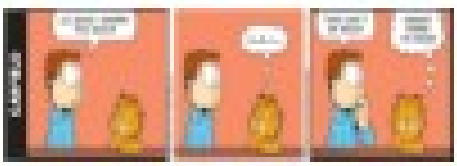
Prakash Raj faces ₹100 Crore defamation suit over his remarks on Ramayana sparking new debate

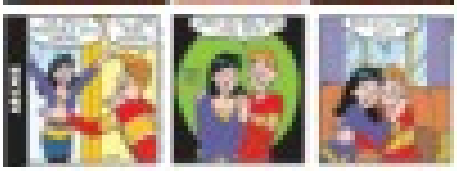
Coachella's pop sisterhood era

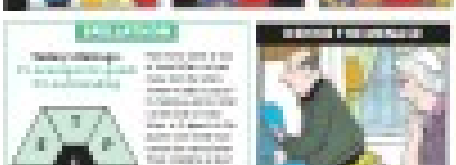
'It's a big responsibility'

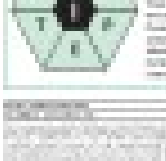
Sabri on receiving Global Iconic Artist Award in UK

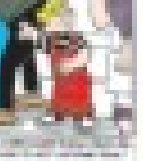
LEISURE











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20-yr delay & no way: Half a road, double traffic trouble

CDP Stretch Held Up Over Land Acquisition Roadblock

Hamsaveni.N@timesofindia.com

Bengaluru: A 6.2-km road proposed under the 2015 Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP) has remained stalled for nearly two decades, worsening congestion and disrupting planned growth in east Bengaluru.

The 140-ft-wide link from Gunjur to ORR via New Horizon College was designed as a key arterial route for Varthur, Panathur and surrounding areas. While stretches from both ends are complete, the central segment is held up by about six acres of forest land, a KPTCL substation, 20 private properties and two temples.

With the link missing, traffic has been forced onto a limited network of narrow roads. Residents report longer commute times and rising congestion as housing supply expands without matching infrastructure. A local survey by residents estimates 15,000+ flats occupied or nearing completion across Panathur and Balagere, with more projects underway.

The CDP road is expected to ease pressure on State Highway 35, Balagere-Panathur Road and Old Airport Road, and provide a direct connection to ORR for Varthur and Gunjur residents.

Progress has been slowed by coordination issues among multiple agencies, including GBA, forest department, KPTCL, and town planning. Forest clearance, though, remains the main obstacle, officials said.

An initial proposal to provide compensatory land near Anekal to the forest department was rejected. Another proposal involving land in Mandur, a bio-mining site, was also turned down as unsuitable for afforestation.

After inspection, forest officials warned the proposed road could damage biodiversity, reduce forest density, disrupt wildlife movement, and affect groundwater recharge. They also flagged that the road would cut through a 33-acre tree park under the Nagaravana scheme, reducing its utility. Officials suggested upgrading existing roads as an alternative, though project proponents argue that the new link is necessary to handle current and future traffic.

East corporation executive engineer Uday Chouguli said KPTCL has agreed to relocate its substation and that property acquisition and temple relocation are pending resolution. "The major problem is the forest land. If that's cleared, we'll be able to move the other processes forward," he said.

'Buyers Are Being Misled'

Residents have sought a halt to new building permissions until the road is approved, arguing that developers continue to market projects by citing the proposed CDP link.

Shwetha R, a Balagere resident, said earlier road-widening promises in Panathur took years and materialised only after protests. "Now the CDP road is being advertised to sell properties, without even a proper road in the area. This will become a problem as new residents, with no choice, will use existing roads that are already congested," she said.

Pavitra Holla from Varthur said, "We don't have good connectivity between Varthur, Gunjur, and ORR. The only option is the congested S-Cross road, or the Old Airport Road. There are so many projects coming up in this area, apartments cannot keep up without mobility infrastructure. The CDP road was needed 10 years ago, and we still see no progress."

Vivek, an IT employee in Panathur, said buyers were being influenced by projected infrastructure. "Almost all builders talk about or showcase CDP road. The cost of recent projects in Varthur and Gunjur has increased significantly. Considering the poor infrastructure, pollution, and terrible traffic conditions, the number of new apartment projects and the prices they quote are unbelievable and unacceptable. People are being misled."

NO GREEN SIGNAL FROM FOREST DEPT

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- They also flagged the road would cut through a 33-acre tree park under the Nagaravana scheme, reducing its utility

LONG PENDING: The 140-ft-wide link was designed as a key arterial route for Varthur, Panathur and surrounding areas

Man, 56, dies inside parked car after party

Bengaluru: A 56-year-old realtor-cum-small-time financier was found dead inside his car in Electronics City Saturday.

The deceased is Narayanappa, a resident of Basapura. Public called police on coming across Narayanappa sitting inside the car, next to the driver seat, unmoved. Police found he was dead and, with the help of his mobile phone found in the trouser pocket, his family were contacted.

Investigations revealed Narayanappa, with his friends Manjunatha Reddy and Shivu, visited a bar in Electronics City Friday night. "The CCTV footage shows Narayanappa, who was high on alcohol, finding it difficult to walk. Reddy and Shivu were seen bringing him out. Thereafter, Manjunath Reddy drove the car, owned by Narayanappa with him," an officer said. Shivu separated from them outside the bar.

After a couple of kilometres, Reddy, who found it difficult to drive, parked the car by roadside and went home. Next day, Narayanappa was found dead inside the vehicle, parked in the same place. Police do not suspect any foul play. TNN

New maintenance policy for BDA apartments from May

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Bengaluru: Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) will introduce a new maintenance policy for its apartment projects from next month, primarily for upcoming projects, while also exploring ways to bring existing ones under a similar framework.

BDA currently maintains essential services such as lifts, security, garbage disposal and common areas, but officials admit that a formal, structured policy governing how maintenance is managed and funded has been lacking. The proposed policy aims to clearly define the developer's responsibility period — likely one to two years — during which BDA will handle maintenance before transferring responsibilities to resident welfare associations (RWAs). The policy focus is on standardising how maintenance charges are calculated and collected. Currently, BDA collects around 1% of the flat cost for newer projects, but it is evaluating alternative models, including per-square-foot charges.

The move also comes in the backdrop of legal uncertainty over apartment registration. While the high court has indicated that associations should be formed under the Cooperative Societies Act, the absence of a formal govt order has stalled registrations. As a result, BDA cannot legally mandate RWAs or transfer common areas until clarity emerges, leaving many apartment complexes in a transitional phase.

"The policy is being developed in consultation with resident groups and is intended to act as an interim framework until the proposed Apartment Act is notified. Alongside, BDA is working on a transition mechanism to hand over maintenance to RWAs," a BDA official said.

RESIDENTS SEEK CLARITY

Pic for representation

The focus of the new policy is on standardising how maintenance charges are calculated and collected

Kiran Ramana, resident of BDA apartments in Whitefield, said: "Since there is no association, we may hire a private vendor for maintenance. We are open to the new policy because without an association, it is difficult to collect maintenance charges and address defaulters legally. If BDA manages it, they can adjust dues from the amounts already paid by residents. However, we still believe an association can help streamline maintenance, and push BDA to complete all pending work faster."

Shashank S, founding member of BDA Apartment Owners Forum, said: "We welcome the step. However, it requires clear and thoughtful implementation. At present, BDA collects 1% of the flat value as maintenance fee at the time of sale deed registration, but there is no defined SOP outlining the scope, duration or management of these funds."

He added: "We urge BDA to issue comprehensive guidelines covering a clear service charge framework, collection and compliance mechanisms, scope of day-to-day maintenance, and contractual provisions for future transfer of responsibilities to RWAs."

7-year-old girl loses way, rescued in 45 minutes

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: Staff from a Hoysala police vehicle traced a seven-year-old girl who went missing from her Chikkagollarahatti residence in Byadarahalli on April 16 afternoon.

MISSING FROM PARK

The mother was seen searching for the girl around 12.15pm, and on noticing her, the public called police control room (112).

The task was handed over to Hoysala-93 manned by ASI Shivanna and constable Shivaraj.

The officials interacted with the mother and learnt that the girl, who was playing outside her house a little earlier, was missing. "There were a few other children who were playing with her and when questioned, they told the mother that the girl went ahead. Quickly, we reached a few shops on the road where the children were playing and scanned the CCTV footage. That helped us in tracing the girl and her movement," Byadarahalli police said.

The girl, in search of other children who were playing in a nearby park, walked away and lost her way. Around 45 minutes later, she was found near a shop a kilometre ahead. The shop owner had noticed that the girl was alone and was questioning her when we reached," police said.

Man pushed to death from pub

A 32-year-old man was pushed to death from the second floor of a pub in Vijayanagar II Stage in Mysuru on Saturday night.

Gokulam resident Nishant, who works for a private firm in Bengaluru, has been identified as the deceased.

Police said Nishant, who was at home till 9.30pm, left for the pub with two friends. When he came out, a war of words broke out with a six-member rowdy gang around 11.30pm. It has been alleged that the gang members pushed Nishant from the second floor. His friends rushed him to a private hospital, where he breathed his last around 1am.

His friends alleged that they were also assaulted by the gang. A case has been registered at Vijayanagar police station. The entire incident was captured in the CCTV of the pub, his friends said. TNN

SC judge: K'taka's judicial allocation in 3 yrs 'peanuts'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Justice Kumar urged the state to allocate at least 75% to 80% of court-collected revenue for judicial infrastructure. The remarks were made in the presence of CJI

Bengaluru: Supreme Court Justice Aravind Kumar Saturday questioned the Karnataka govt over its low spending on judicial infrastructure, saying allocations over the past three financial years were "peanuts" compared to court-generated revenue.

At the 22nd Biennial State-Level Conference of Judicial Officers, Kumar directly addressed CM Siddaramaiah, who was present on stage, briefly switching from English to Kannada. "By way of fine, duty penalty, what the courts have collected for the last three years is Rs 376 crore, Rs 439 crore, and Rs 470 crore (respectively). Other than the salary, what has been given by the state govt is Rs 1 crore, Rs 40 lakh, and around Rs 1.3 lakh (in last 3 years). That means it's peanuts," he said.

Justice Kumar urged the state to allocate at least 75% to 80% of court-collected revenue for judicial infrastructure. He also highlighted the rising burden on courts, noting that litigation increased from 17 lakh cases in 2023 to 22 lakh in 2025. The remarks were made in the presence of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant.

Cautioning against adopting centralised approaches, Kumar said: "Delhi is important but it is not the measure of India. What may appear efficient in Delhi may when mechanically transported elsewhere prove unsettling, alien, and even counterproductive....Karnataka does not need borrowed habits of authority."

Pointing to lack of adequate staff, he said against a request for 666 posts for Karnataka high court's three benches, only 230 were sanctioned. In the district judiciary, 680 requested posts were reduced to 400, he said.

NIOS paper errors confuse students, parents

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Bengaluru: Parents of children who wrote their senior secondary school exam under the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) have flagged several issues with the question papers, leading to confusion among students. Despite reaching out to NIOS through emails, parents say they have not received a prompt response on the next course of action.

Parents told **TOI** that the question papers were printed at the centres instead of being delivered in sealed packets. They alleged this was a breach of confidentiality and protocol.

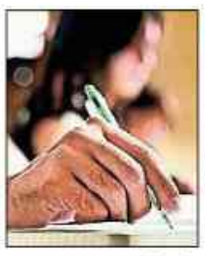
The accountancy question paper accessed by the parents shows several inaccuracies. Though there is a mention of Sections A and B, there is no demarcation between the sections. This led to confusion in the format of the paper. The total number of questions is 55, even as the initial instructions on the paper mentioned 47 as the total number.

"NIOS is largely taken by children with learning difficulties. Many students were overwhelmed by this goof-up," Sandhya Viswan, a homeschooling parent, who runs the Bangalore Schools group, said. "Parents from Coimbatore, Chennai and Kochi have also expressed similar concerns, making this a probable regionwide issue," she added.

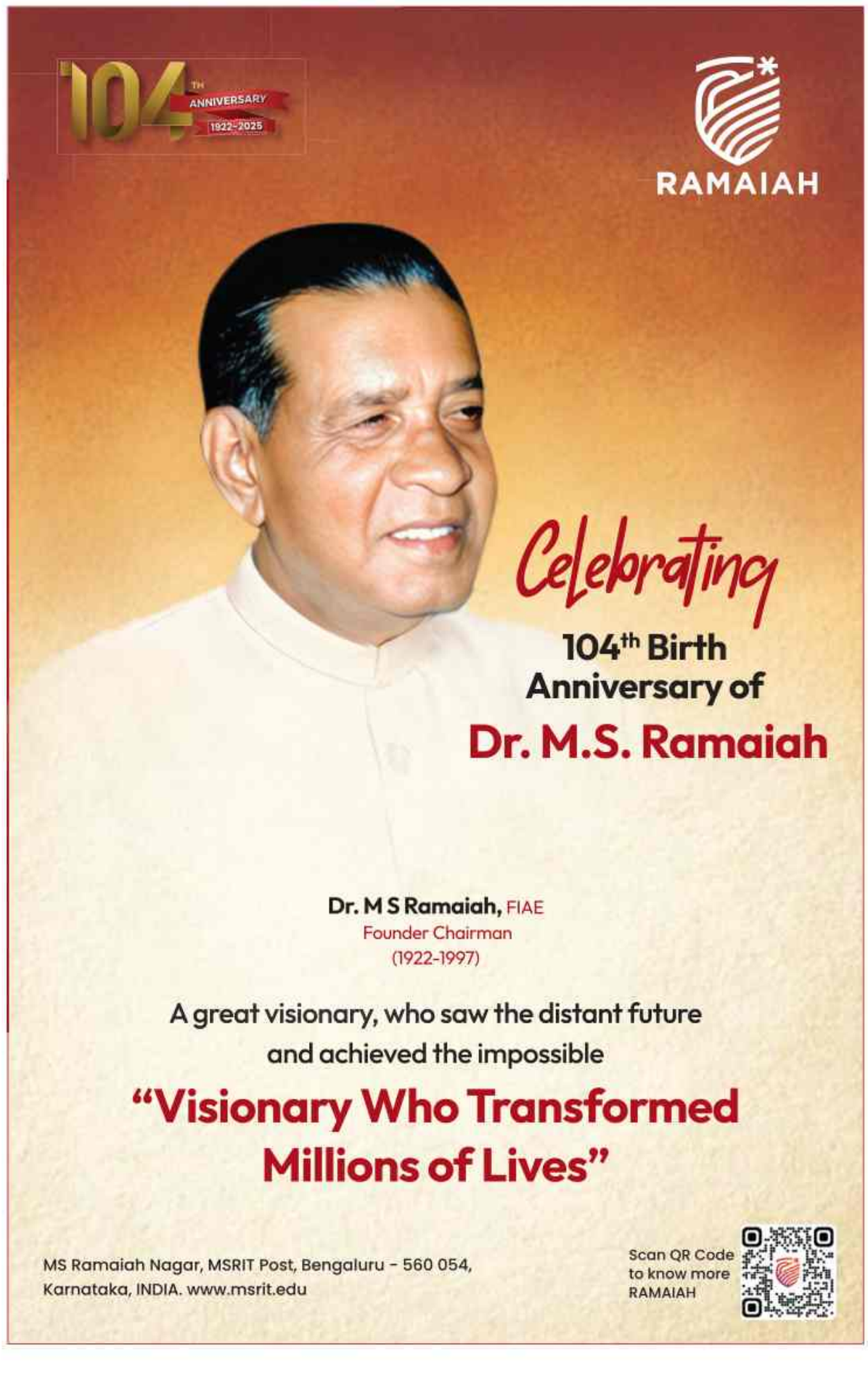
The biology paper from Pune and the accountancy paper from Uttarakhand accessed by parents were significantly different from the ones in Bengaluru.

Parents also flagged issues with the biology paper. "Some questions were repeated, the diagrams were unclear, and there were errors in the multiple-choice questions. My son is enrolled in gifted programmes such as Johns Hopkins Centre for Talented Youth, USA. We have chosen NIOS homeschooling here because of the great flexibility it offers. It would be great to see some improvements in their processes," a parent said.

NIOS regional director V Swaminathan said he had not gone through the papers and passed the blame on to the head office, emphasising that he was not an academician but an administrator.



"All papers are prepared by the headquarters and sent to us. We have no role in formatting the papers locally. Only two to three parents have complained so far
V SWAMINATHAN
NIOS regional director



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Conflict cuts luxury's Middle East boom

The soldiers stillness of Dubai malls

The Intl's outsized role in luxury profits

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RAGA & RIFF: Carnatic fusion finds its footing

Bengaluru is increasingly opening its ears to rhythms that sit between tradition and experimentation. Carnatic–jazz fusion, once seen as niche, is now finding a more defined space in the city's cultural landscape, reflecting a shift in both how musicians approach collaboration and how audiences engage with cross-genre work

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Carnatic violinist Jyotsna Srikanth and her ensemble 'Carnatic Jazz Trio' are busy wrapping up preparations for their performance in Bengaluru on May 2. For Jyotsna, the upcoming concert connects deeply on a personal level — it's a symbolic revisit to 'Bangalore Dreams', an EP that continues to shape her exploration of Carnatic–jazz fusion.

Originally released in 2015 when Carnatic-jazz was still a niche, and now reintroduced to audiences, the project reflects her attempt to bring together the melodic depth of Carnatic music with the improvisational freedom of jazz, creating what she describes as a more open yet rooted musical expression.

The starting point, says Jyotsna, is often not structure but emotion. "It always begins with the mood," she says, recalling how one of the tracks was shaped by the longing she felt while living away from Bengaluru, capturing memories of home and her mother rather than a purely technical framework.

That sense of emotional grounding is also reflected in the collaborators she brings together. The Trio features Shadrach Solomon on keyboards and N Amrith on kanjira, with live performances often expanding to include piano, drums, and Indian percussion to create a more layered, dynamic sound.

> From a compositional standpoint, creating meaningful fusion requires a deep understanding of how different instruments function and interact—knowing their tonal qualities, dynamics and how they can complement each other within a piece
> **Karthik Mani** | PERCUSSIONIST

When two worlds meet

From Carnatic ragas meeting jazz improvisation to rhythm-driven collaborations that draw from across continents, the idea of fusion is no longer just experimental—it is evolving into a more defined musical language.

Trained in both Indian and Western classical traditions, Jyotsna sees a natural bridge between the two worlds. "The shared foundation of improvisation is what drew me to jazz," she explains, noting that while Carnatic music builds around ragas and jazz around chords, the underlying principle of spontaneous creation connects them.

Karthik Mani, the percussionist, who has collaborated with legends like Zakir Hussain, Kadri Gopalnath, Shankar Mahadevan and Hariharan, says the evolution of fusion music in India reflects both changing audiences and expanding musical possibilities. He points out that classical concerts, once sprawling affairs lasting several hours, have adapted to a faster-paced, contemporary audience, with shorter formats and a more immediate engagement. At the same time, access to global music through the internet has allowed younger musicians to absorb diverse influences—from African rhythms to konnakol—more seamlessly than ever before.

A performance at The Humming Tree

Why it draws strong crowds

Tracing fusion's trajectory back to pioneering collaborations like Shakti (the fusion band featuring John McLaughlin and Zakir Hussain), Karthik notes that what began as a meeting of Indian classical and jazz traditions has now grown into a far more diverse and global practice.

Yet, despite these shifts, one constant remains: audiences continue to seek quality, with fusion concerts often drawing strong, engaged crowds. On what makes a fusion project feel authentic, Karthik emphasises the importance of both structure and skill. "From a compositional standpoint, creating meaningful fusion requires a deep understanding of how different instruments function and interact—knowing their tonal qualities, dynamics and how they can complement each other within a piece."

Jyotsna Srikanth

By contrast, he describes much of what is labelled as "experimental" as unstructured jamming, where musicians come together with little preparation. While such spontaneity can sometimes produce compelling results, especially when all the artists involved are highly skilled, it can just as easily fall flat without a clear musical direction. "Ultimately, audiences can sense the difference. Without a strong foundation in both craft and collaboration, fusion risks sounding disjointed."

Having spent over a decade in the UK as part of Europe's global music circuit before returning to Bengaluru, Jyotsna says Indian audiences today are increasingly open to such experimentation, even as a section continues to prefer more traditional formats. At the same time, she emphasises that the growth of such music depends not just on listeners, but on organisers being more willing to programme and support cross-genre work.

Over the years, her work has consistently explored these intersections through collaborations across cultures—from Swedish folk and Balkan jazz to orchestral and brass band settings. In 2023, she was awarded the MBE (Member of the Order of the British Empire) by Charles III for her contribution to music, marking a recognition of a career that has bridged traditions, geographies, and musical languages.

> Many contemporary collaborations are increasingly driven by visibility and digital reach, often reworking familiar film songs or well-known Carnatic compositions into cover versions rather than developing new musical ideas from scratch
> **Ravi Kulur** | FLAUTIST

Viral at the cost of originality?

Noted flautist Ravi Kulur, who has worked with some of the biggest names in Indian and global music, offers a more critical take on the current fusion landscape. He points to a growing trend-driven approach in today's fusion space, where the focus, he says, is shifting away from originality towards popular appeal and viral success.

"Many contemporary collaborations are increasingly driven by visibility and digital reach, often reworking familiar film songs or well-known Carnatic compositions into cover versions rather than developing new musical ideas from scratch," says Ravi. While he acknowledges the abundance of talent in the current generation, he believes that truly original thinking is relatively limited.

Even so, the veteran remains optimistic about the future, expressing hope that younger musicians will move beyond reinterpretations and invest in more raw, original ideas.

On Bengaluru's evolving audience, he points out it as a positive sign for the fusion space. "The city has developed a discerning listener base that is open to such cross-genre experiments—one that cuts across age and gender, united more by musical curiosity than demographics."

Venues embrace fusion

At the venue level, too, there is a growing recognition of fusion as a sustained movement rather than a passing trend. Nikhil Barua of The Humming Tree says experimental, cross-genre blends have now become a mainstay and are likely to remain a central part of the live music landscape. "Experimental blends are no longer on the fringes," he says.

"We've had excellent reception so far for our neo-Carnatic and cross-genre concerts, from both artists as well as audiences," says Samhita Nagaraj, founder and curator of The Blue Room.

Bengaluru's long-standing engagement with cross-genre music is also reflected in platforms like the Udupa Music Festival at Chowdiah Memorial Hall, which has, over the years, hosted legendary artists such as John McLaughlin, Zakir Hussain, and L Subramaniam, highlighting the city's enduring connect with global fusion traditions.

BEST OF OORU

Popular places in city that host Carnatic-jazz events

Windmills Craftworks (Whitefield)
This is one of the city's most respected spots for serious music listeners. It features a dedicated jazz theatre with world-class acoustics, often hosting renowned fusion acts

Bangalore International Centre
A hub for cultural exchange, BIC, located in Domlur, regularly schedules 'Jugalbandi' sessions and experimental concerts where Mediterranean or Western jazz artists collaborate with local Carnatic vocalists and instrumentalists

The Blue Room
A boutique performance space in Jayanagar known for its curated, unplugged sessions. It is a favourite for local musicians

The Humming Tree
The Humming Tree has officially reopened in 2026 and is once again a central hub for the city's independent and fusion music scenes. Now located in a significantly larger, 12,000-square-foot purpose-built space in Indiranagar, the venue is particularly relevant for Carnatic jazz enthusiasts

Alliance Francaise de Bangalore
A staple in the city's cultural landscape that frequently organizes jazz festivals and Indo-French fusion concerts at its Vasanth Nagar premises

The first traffic signal on NR Junction, near Hudson Circle

How Bengaluru got its first traffic signal

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With chock-a-block traffic even on nondescript bylanes, driving around in Bengaluru has become a nightmare for motorists — perhaps except for those who go on night drives past midnight! The city traffic police constantly think hard to deploy every possible method—from artificial to human intelligence to lane restrictions, flyovers, roundabouts and road dividers—to ensure vehicles move at least at bumper-to-bumper speed.

STREET VIEW

Until 1963, traffic police manually managed vehicular movement in the city using hand signals. That year, Bengaluru got its first traffic signal at NR Junction, near Hudson Circle. Soon, traffic signals started popping up at busy crossroads.

NR (Narasimharaja) junction is at one end of Narasimharaja Road, which starts at the junction between KR (Krishna Rajendra) Road and Avenue Road. NR Road is adjacent to Silver Jubilee Park. The park had seen better days and no longer attracts regular footfalls. If you head towards Town Hall, you will pass by SP Road, where people shop for computer peripherals and electronic items at steep discounts.

Once upon a time, NR junction was one of the busiest junctions in the city as it connected the older parts of Bengaluru around the Fort to the Cantonment areas such as MG Road and Richmond Town.

The signal became necessary as traffic towards the southern areas such as Jayanagar also increased.

The traffic signal installed at NR junction was procured from Madras, where signal lights had been set up almost a decade earlier. The signal light was just a tin box with a red glass and a bulb inside. It was only a few days later that an electric automated signal with red, amber and green lights was installed in 1963.

> **Until Bengaluru got its first traffic signal in 1963, the city traffic police used to manage vehicular movement using hand signals**

The signal was inaugurated by the then city commissioner of police C Chandy, IPS, and BN Garudachar, DCP (traffic). In 2021, the Bengaluru Traffic Police commemorated the installation of the city's first traffic signal.

As more traffic signals were installed from South End Circle to Majestic through Lalbagh Circle, Minerva Circle, Town Hall and Corporation Circle, traffic police synchronised them so that vehicles get a green signal as they pass each junction. However, the increased traffic density in recent days means we do not always get this green corridor.

Some of the notable landmarks around the junction are Canara Bank head office, LIC divisional office, Unity Building and the GBA head office.

Forget groundwater, tap surface runoff: Expert

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: With Bengaluru constantly staring at water crisis, especially during summers, city-based hydrogeologist KC Subhash Chandra Sunday pointed out that there was too much, and unsustainable, dependence on groundwater.

Taking part in a Lifetide Film Festival themed around water resources, he said: "Groundwater isn't a sustainable resource. Nearly 25% of the surface runoff water in Bengaluru drains into sewage canals, which are already polluted. The lakes aren't getting fresh water, and their carrying capacity has also come down because of silt."

Chandra, a former expert member of Karnataka Groundwater Authority, suggested that rooftop rainwater harvesting be made compulsory in the city. Nearly 80,000 cubic metres of water can be generated from a single rooftop, considering the city's rainfall data, he said.

He reminded groundwater served the city for many years, but rampant exploitation through borewells depleted it. Themed "Water in Motion," the film festival screened seven documentary films, depicting scarcity for water in the country.

'P for Pyaaz, P for Paisa, P for Paani', directed by Laxminarayan Devda, a farmer from Madhya Pradesh, was among the films screened.

The film documented the fragile hydrogeological region of Narmada Valley, where a sizeable number of affluent farmers arrive from the Malwa plateau region to obtain land on lease and grow onion, a water-intensive crop.

AI, edu, policy alignment key to India's $30 trillion goal, say experts

Bengaluru: India's ambition to become a $30 trillion economy by 2047 will hinge on how well AI is integrated with education, governance and industry, speakers said at a pre-buildathon collective intelligence session held by Bharat1.ai.

At the event titled 'How does India leverage AI and its demographic dividend to become an inclusive $30 trillion economy by 2047?', the focus remained on structural gaps that could determine whether AI-led growth translates into broad-based economic gains.

Srikanth Nadhamuni, co-founder and CEO of Khosla labs (startup incubator) and founder CTO of UIDAI placed primary education at the centre of the AI conversation. "India's demographic dividend would mean nothing if our foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN) is poor," he said.

Former department of science and technology (DST) secretary Ashutosh Sharma, said, "We need a science and technology wing in every govt department. Decentralising technology and developing India-centric AI is essential."

Bharat1.ai co-founder, Subhashis Banerjee highlighted a disconnect between India's talent pool and its ability to convert that into market leadership. Mohandas Pai underlined AI's immediate economic impact, particularly in improving efficiency.

Bharat1.ai co-founders Umakant Soni and Sireesh Kupendra, Lt Gen Arun Ananthanarayan (retd), and Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) chairperson S Ramann were among the other speakers who addressed around 50 industry leaders. TNN

EU-India FTA can accelerate cooperation in aviation sector

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: Annett Baessler, deputy consul general of the German Consulate General in Bengaluru, highlighted the potential of the proposed EU–India Free Trade Agreement to significantly boost collaboration in the aviation sector.

At the 9th International Conference on the Future of Aviation and Aerospace 2026, hosted by IIM Bangalore in partnership with TBS Education, France, she emphasised opportunities in maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO), workforce development, and deeper sectoral integration, which could create a strong new momentum between India and Europe. She noted that Europe's highly integrated aviation market gives German and European companies a competitive edge globally. India, currently the fifth-largest aviation market, is expected to become the third-largest in a decade. European firms are actively supporting this growth, with Airbus alone holding around 1,250 aircraft orders from Indian clients. Additionally, India's MRO sector is projected to reach $9.5 billion in the coming decade.

Prof S Raghunath, conference chair at IIMB, said, "Our opportunity lies in leading in maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO), as well as lifecycle intelligence. For decades, we have been the IT backbone of the world. Given that strength, it is not difficult for us to recognise a simple reality: While aircraft sales generate revenue, far greater value lies in keeping those aircraft operational. We already have the technology, the engineering talent, and the skilled workforce needed to capitalise on it."

> **Sunil Bhaskaran, director of Air India Aviation Academy, Air India, observed the penetration of air travel in India is still at about one-tenth of its population, indicating potential for growth**

At a panel discussion on "Make in India - The Achievements of Indian Companies", Kota Harinarayana, former programme director and chief designer of Tejas Light Combat Aircraft, said, "Three decades ago, India took the initiative to launch Tejas in military aviation, and today, we not only produce quality combat aircraft in numbers, but we are also developing the ecosystem — manufacturing, technology, and supply chains. In the next two decades, a range of state-of-the-art combat aircraft will be produced indigenously."

TIMES NIE CONGRATULATES THE SCHOOL TOPPERS OF CBSE CLASS 10 EXAMS 2025-26 & EXTENDS BEST WISHES FOR THEIR FUTURE

School	Topper	School	Topper
Nagarjuna Vidyaniketan, Yelahanka	Raghav Rustagi	SJR Public School, HBR Layout	Sanvi Agrawal
National Academy for Learning, North	Aadhya Prashanth & Gauri Gupta Johri	SJR Public School, HBR Layout	Pranita Sudhir
National Centre for Excellence, CVR	Gargi Prashant Laddha & Karol Mary Ajax	Smt Kamalabai Educational Institution	Shambhavi Bhattacharya
National Centre for Excellence, Indiranagar	Varsha	Soundarya Central School, Sidedahalli	Poorvika KY
National Hill View Public School, Banashankari	Akash Chetan Rao & Abhinav Ramesh	Soundarya School CBSE, Havanoor Extension	Jayanth Kumar R
National Hill View Public School, RR Nagar	Sumukh Aditya Sridhar	Sree Ayyappa Education Centre CBSE, Medarahalli	Devananda Bijesh
National Public School, Agaraa	Nitya Premini Mayur Patil	Sree Swamy Vivekananda Higher Primary School	Namratha R Naik
National Public School, Koramangala	Sreejani Bhaduri	Sri Jnanakshi Vidya Niketan, RR Nagar	Shreya S
National Public School, Indiranagar	Swanti Goel	Sri Sarvajna Public School, Vijayanagar	Keerthana M
National Public School, Rajajinagar	Animesh Gupta	Sri Sri Ravishankar Vidya Mandir, Vignannagar	Dyuthi Venkatraghavan
National Public School, Banashankari	Vanshika Parameswaran & Sejal Sinha	Sri Sri Ravishankar Vidya Mandir, East	Nandika Hiran
National Public School, Chikkabanavara	Anvitha Sanadi	Sri Sri Ravishankar Vidya Mandir, North	Veda
National Public School, HSR Layout	Rishi Verma	St Paul's School, Pattegarapalya	A Esha Pawar
National Public School, ITPL	Gatik Sapra	St Joseph's School, Vittal Mallya Road	Marc Thomas
National Public School, Jalahalli	Arshia Kaler	St Sophia Convent High School, Nagarabhavi	Shreya M
National Public School, Kengeri	Aditi V Satish	Sudarshan Vidya Mandir CBSE, Jayanagar	Samprada Nuggehalli Deepak
National Public School, Sadashivnagar	Shaarav Aradhya M V	Sudarshan Vidya Mandira, BG Road	Nidhi Ballal
National Public School, Uttarahalli	Shivani Prakash Kuve	Sunrise NAVI International School, Bone Mill	Abhishek M
National Public School, Yeshwantpur	Vihan Hiremath	The Brigade School, JP Nagar	Kaira Baliga
National Public School, Whitefield	Noshi Singh	The Brigade School, Mahadevapura	Devanarayan V Pillai
National Public School, Jayanagar	Rhys Sonigrah Ramesh	The Brigade School, Malleswaram	Arnav N Vasishta
Navkis Educational Centre, Gokula	Ojas A Kalmane	The Cambridge International School, Haralur branch	Mannat Kaur
Navkis Educational Centre, Mysuru	Amrutha SB	The Deens Academy, Whitefield	Arshiya Goel
New Baldwin Int Res School, Mandur	SB Sathvik	The Foundation School	Shruthi KT
New Baldwin Int School, Banaswadi	Shanvi Swain	The Home School	Tarun Naik J
New Baldwin Int School, TC Palya	Tanisha C	The Knowledge Habitat School	Abhinav Muni
New Baldwin Int Res School, Anekal	Pragathi L	The Lalith Castle International School, RR Nagar	Athena Mohanty
New Baldwin Int School, Anekal	Goutam Kini	The Oxford Senior Secondary School	Manmeeth H
New Baldwin Int School, Attibele	Thanushree S	The Polaris International School	Sparsh Jagadeesh Shettigar
New Baldwin Int School, Chandapura	Guruprasad Mohanty	The Prodigies International School	Swarda Sachin Bhosle
Nobel School, Alipur	S Neha Hashimi	Vidya Spoorthi School	Tanisha N
Presidency School, Bangalore South	Advaith Arun	VELS Global School, HSR Layout	Muppuri Sai Harshini
Presidency School, Bangalore North	Swastik Yogendra Rathi	Vishwa Vidyapeeth (CBSE), Honnenahalli	Mythili M Danivas
PSBB Learning Leadership Academy	Ahana Bhat	Vishwa Vidyapeeth (CBSE), Gunjur	Nikhila Sai Kumaralli
R J Public School	Manish Kami	Whitefield Global School	Sana Shiraz
Rashtriya Military School, Museum Road	Chirag	Yashasvi Vidyaniketan	Saanvi S Shetty
Samsidh International School, Hormavu	Aarna Kanyal	Young Scholars Academy	Shaurya
Samsidh International School, HSR Layout	Nakul Pradeep Pillai	KLE Society's School, Rajajinagar	Pratham S Shet, Shivaprasad M Gadag & Tanya Vijyakumar
Sandeepani Academy for Excellence	Aneeshwar	National Public School, Hosur Road	Veer Patil
School of India	Adeeba Parvez	National Public School, Uttarahalli	Shivani Prakash Kuve, Savithru
SFS Academy	Lekhana Surisetty	Sri Aurobindo Memorial School, Banashankari	Yadhavi D Kanekal
Shiksha Sagar High School	Lavanya Sinha		
Shishya BEML Public School	Rajdeep Biswas		
Siddaganga Public School, Vijayanagar	Ansh Prabhu & Tanmayee KR		
Silver Spring International School, Chikkbanavara	Mahajanam Lakshmi Pallavi		
Sindhi High School, Hebbal	Tanush R		
Sindhi High School, KK Road	Rachan R Rai		

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OBITUARY

With deep sorrow, we announce the demise of
Sri C. Ramachandra Reddy, Retd.
A.E.E (B.D.A), on 19 April 2026.

Last Rites on **20 April,12:00 PM** at Harishchandra Ghat, Malleshwaram.
Contact: **9980406117, 9845711313**

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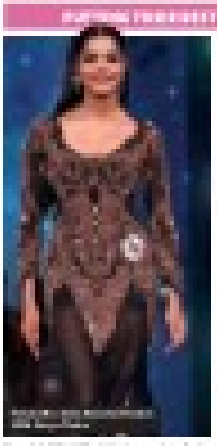

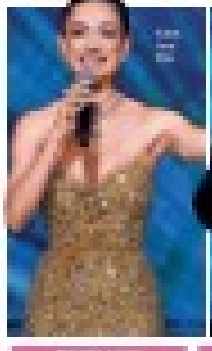

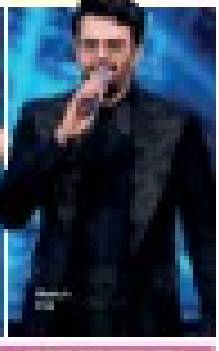

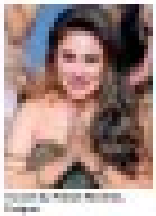

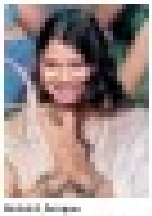

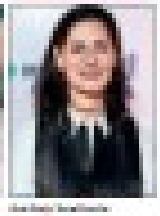

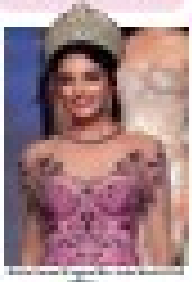

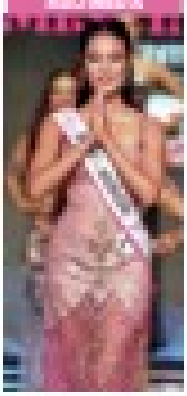

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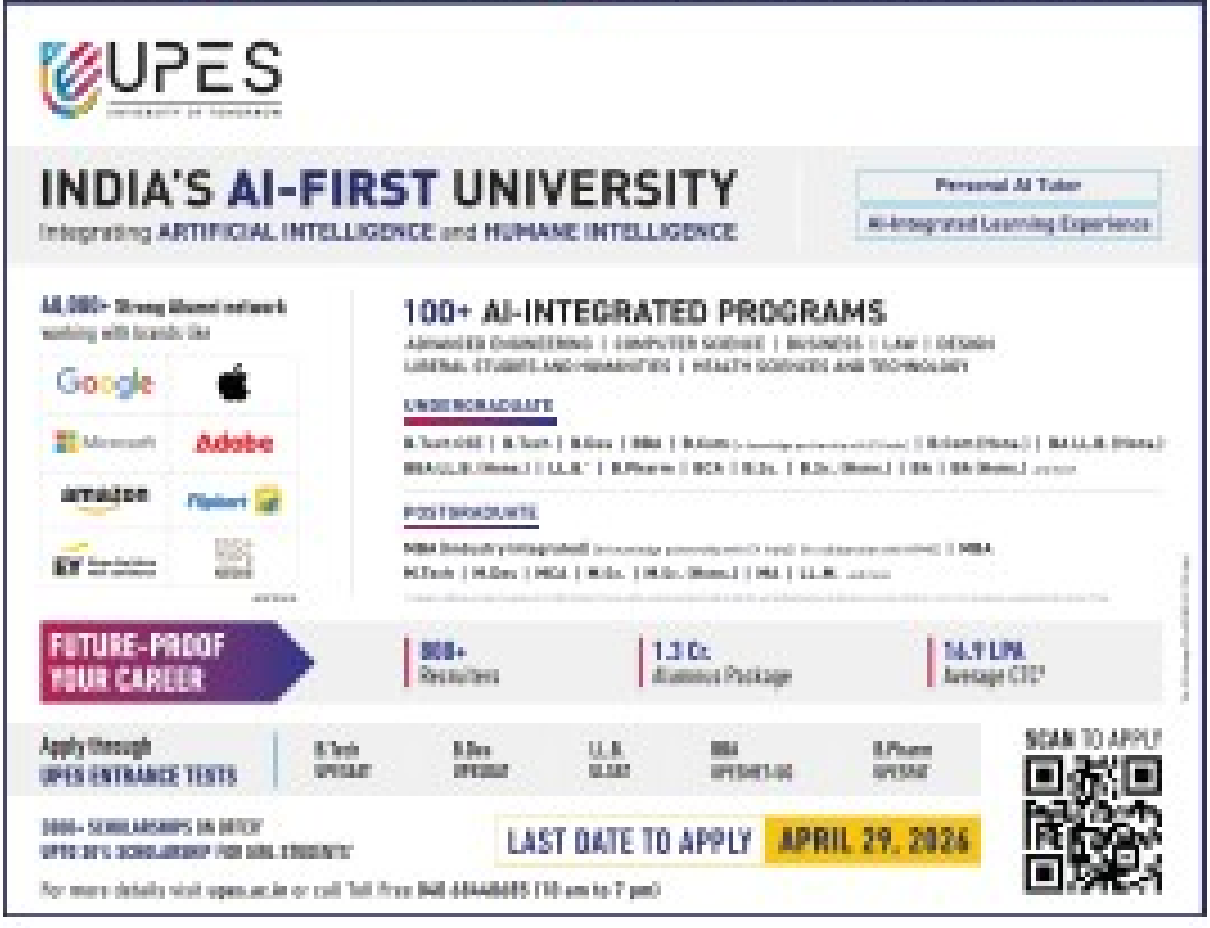
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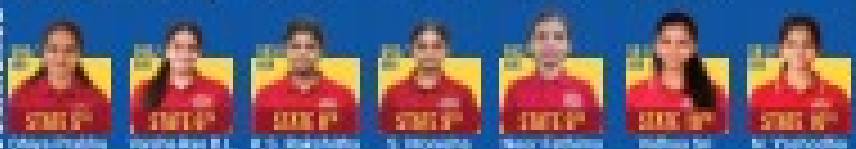

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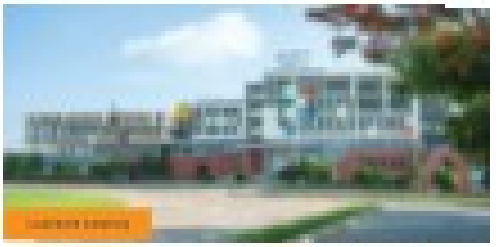

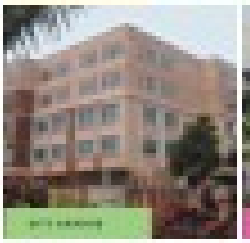

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Vemula Bill prohibits family profile checks

Lists Out 30 Actions Of Bias On Campuses

Sandeep.Moudgal
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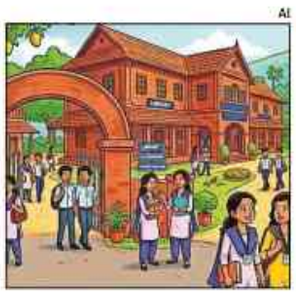
AI

The bill suggest that no SC/ST student can be forced or steered into actions that are against their beliefs and there should be no curriculum content that glorifies castes

Bengaluru: The state govt, which approved the Rohith Vemula Bill, has listed 30 discriminatory actions in higher educational institutions which may attract penal clauses under the proposed law.

The Karnataka Rohith Vemula (Prevention of Discrimination, Exclusion or Injustice) (Right to Education and Dignity) Bill 2026, accessed by **TOI**, makes note of a series of "perceived" actions that may debilitate the students from SC/ST communities.

This is in addition to the more commonly heard discriminatory actions of compelling them to vacate hostels, drop out of college due to casteist slurs, not allowing their participation in classrooms or academic engagements and segregating them.

Some of the specific discriminatory actions explained in the bill suggest that no SC/ST student can be "forced" or "steered" into actions that are against their beliefs or targets their background. For instance, during the admission processes or interviews, questions probing their social background or family occupation in ways that disadvantage or humiliate SC/ST candidates, rather than limiting the inquiry to academic qualifications or subject-related competencies, cannot be asked.

Curriculum content that glorifies certain castes or portrays members of SC/STs in a derogatory or demeaning manner, thereby perpetuating caste-based prejudice and discrimination, will violate the proposed law.

The scope also extends to faculty who can be held responsible for violating the proposed law if "unjust failing or awarding disproportionately low marks to SC/ST" are given in viva-voce and lab exams despite their "satisfactory or high performance". Institutions cannot impose unequal access schedules for faculty interactions on SC/ST students, in a manner that differentiate them from other students on the basis of their caste identity.

Institutions and staff will also feel the heat of the authorities if they "force" SC/ST students' participation or attendance in religious or cultural events contrary to their personal beliefs and practices, and steering the community members towards particular disciplines, fields or career paths arbitrarily deemed "suitable" for them.

BJP, Cong trade blame on delimitation, quota

Times News Network

Bengaluru: BJP continued Sunday the narrative launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, asserting that the party is working to ensure justice for women through 33% reservation by increasing seats via delimitation, while accusing the Congress of misleading the public.

Addressing the media, BJP functionary **Anurag Thakur** dismissed allegations that the exercise would reduce representation for southern states.

"The southern states have 24% representation despite having 20% of the population, while northern India has 27% representation for 30% of its population. We are ensuring pro-rata political representation and are not taking away anything from anyone. In fact, southern states stand to gain higher representation if the delimitation bill is passed," Thakur said.

Meanwhile, Bengaluru South MP Tejasvi Surya alleged that leaders like Karnataka chief minister Siddaramaiah and Tamil Nadu CM MK Stalin, who oppose delimitation citing losses to southern states, would ultimately be responsible if census-based seat allocation leads to reduced representation.

"It was a practical proposal by the prime minister to increase seats by 50% across all states, but the opposition did not accept it. Siddaramaiah and Stalin will be accountable if southern states lose out when the delimitation commission determines seats solely on census data," Surya said.

However, Siddaramaiah and his deputy DK Shivakumar rejected BJP's claims, accusing the party of attempting to undermine southern representation.

Speaking at Ranebennur, Siddaramaiah clarified that Congress does not oppose women's reservation, but objects to what it sees as an imbalance in constituency reorganisation.

He warned that delimitation could disproportionately benefit northern states, particularly Uttar Pradesh, which may see a significant increase in Lok Sabha seats, while states like Karnataka would experience only marginal gains.

Responding to criticism from Modi, Siddaramaiah said such remarks were politically motivated, especially with upcoming elections in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. "If the bill has overwhelming support in Parliament, why has the Centre not implemented it yet?" he said.

Shivakumar echoed similar concerns, calling the move a "conspiracy" to reduce southern representation. "We have defeated their bill. This is just the beginning," he said.

Siddaramaiah reminds Modi of 40-month 'boast' on suburban rail

Times News Network

The CM said the delay in suburban rail project means continued struggle of commuters and rising transport stress in the city which contributes to India's growth

Bengaluru: Chief minister Siddaramaiah has sought answers from the Union govt over the "inordinate delay" in Bengaluru Suburban Rail Project (BSRP). He said in 2022, ahead of the Karnataka Assembly elections, Prime Minister Narendra Modi "boasted" that the project would be completed within 40 months; however, the deadline has now been pushed to 2030.

"This is not just about a delayed project. It is about the daily struggle of commuters and rising transport stress in a city that keeps contributing to India's growth while being denied timely infrastructure support. My question to the Union govt is this: If Bengaluru's suburban rail was promised as a priority before the election, why has the city been left to suffer delay after delay?" Siddaramaiah asked.

In Oct 2020, K-RIDE, a joint venture of Centre and state, received approval to build the 148-km BSRP network. The agency was given a deadline of 2026, but to date it has not commissioned even a single stretch. While laying the foundation stone in June 2022, Modi assured that the project would become a reality in 40 months.

In Aug 2022, K-RIDE awarded a contract to Larsen & Toubro for Corridor-2 (Baiyappanahalli-Chikkabanavara). The project faced delays, and eventually came to a halt after L&T terminated the contract last year. The company also exited Corridor-4 (Heelalige-Rajankunte), for which it secured the contract in Dec 2023.

The state govt has criticised the Centre for delays in railway land transfer and design approvals, while the Centre has argued that K-RIDE lacks the technical expertise to execute such a complex project and should be headed by a technocrat.

MP Mohan: Land delay slowed progress

Responding to the CM's jibe, Bengaluru Central MP PC Mohan Sunday hit back, blaming the state govt for delays.

He said execution rests primarily with the state, arguing the hold-up stems from "state-level bottlenecks," not a lack of Union support. Mohan noted the state holds a 51% stake in Karnataka Rail Infrastructure Development Company and said delays in land transfer and acquisition have slowed progress. "Land acquisition and on-ground readiness have lagged due to state delays," he added in a post on X.

No water crisis for now: Officials

▶ Continued from page 1

At present, the region requires a monthly requirement of 2tmcft of drinking water.

Officials ruled out any immediate drinking water crisis, reassuring residents of Bengaluru, Mandya, Mysuru and Ramanagara. Cauvery Neeravari Nigam executive engineer Jayanth V said, "At present, there is no shortage of water for agriculture too. However, people and farmers should use water judiciously."

While India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast further rise in temperature, authorities are categorical that there's no shortage in the region till June, which conventionally heralds monsoon.

Man climbs 575 steps carrying granny

Koppal: Anjanadri Hill in Anegondi is believed to be the birthplace of Lord Hanuman. It has been a pilgrimage place and an adventurous spot for people to climb 575 steps all the way to the temple on top of the steep hill.

However, Ajay, a youth from Vijayanagara district, reportedly climbed the hill - while carrying his 90-year-old grandmother Friday evening. He said it was aimed to fulfil his grandmother's long-pending wish of having darshan of Anjaneyaswamy at Anjanadri Hills. Their photographs have gone viral on social media. TNN

Govt looks to turn sludge into ₹120cr windfall

Sandeep.Moudgal
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TOI

REVENUE SOURCE: Bengaluru has 34 wastewater treatment plants, generating 200 tonnes of sludge every day. The state govt seeks to monetise it

> We expect the entire project to take off in the next six months. The first phase of five wastewater treatment plants is selected on the basis of the technical feasibility and close proximity to piped gas lines. We expect as much as 30,000 cubic metres per day. Land will be provided for setting up biogas generation facilities on the premises of the wastewater treatment plants, and the cost will be entirely borne by the private party bidding for the project across the five STPs
>
> **V Ram Prasath Manohar** | BWSSB CHAIRMAN

Bengaluru: With the govt finding innovative models to monetise every possible avenue to generate revenue for local bodies and reduce the burden on the exchequer, the state cabinet has approved a proposal to sell 200 tonnes of sludge generated by Bengaluru for the production of biogas every day.

The move had been initially announced in the budget document of 2025-26.

The project is expected to be taken up on a pilot basis with sludge from five waste treatment plants under the Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) to be considered in the first phase. There are 34 wastewater treatment plants in the city, which treat 1,348.5 MLD every day and generate 200 tonnes of sludge.

The govt has approved the plan to sell the sludge to private entities, considering the "high organic matter content" which is conducive for bio-gas production through anaerobic digestion.

This will be taken up under a public-private partnership (PPP) model that is expected to generate Rs 85 crore a year. The five waste water treatment plants considered for the first phase are two units in the KC Valley, and one each at Bellandur Amanikere, Vishveshhwara Valley and Hebbal valley.

Overall, the five treatment plants generate 550 MLD of water and generate substantial sludge every day. The proposal was supposedly vetted by KPMG, which conducted a technical and financial analysis of such a project.

Accordingly, the project was decided to be taken up on a design, build, finance, operate and transfer basis with the concession period of a whopping 20 years that shall include one year of construction. The proposal also sees BWSSB having a "penal clause" which is enforceable if it fails to supply the sludge in the expected capacity, apart from ensuring "minimum extent of land" for the private firm to produce the biogas.

According to BWSSB, the project will have a "potential" to generate revenue of Rs 120 crore per year. Its chairman V Ram Prasath Manohar told **TOI** that the project technology has not been ascertained in Karnataka but claimed it is prevalent in other parts of India.

2 undergoing treatment

▶ Continued from page 1

Two others reported to be in critical condition are undergoing treatment at a hospital in Mysuru city.

The deceased were identified as Saida Fathima, 38, from Udhagamandalamy; Yasin Babu, 23, Bengaluru; Haima Arif, 13, Bengaluru; Neha Yasin, 20, Bannur in Mysuru district; Umer Sadiq, 7, Udayagiri in Mysuru; and Afia Ujair, 20, Udayagiri in Mysuru.

In the second incident, two youths drowned in Periyapatna. According to Bylakuppe police, four friends from Periyapatna town arrived at Ranigate to swim in the river.

The deceased have been identified as Ganesh, 20, and Irfan, 28, who were working as daily labourers.

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I, Praveen Kumar Nagaraj S/O P. Nagaraj born on 22/04/1978 residing at House No. 5, Second Floor, Akshara Layout, Kattigenahalli, Yelahanka, Bangalore - 560064, Karnataka, have changed my name to Praveen Kumar N vide affidavit dated 15/04/2026 at Bangalore. Henceforth, I shall be known as Praveen Kumar N for all purposes.

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Incomplete chargesheet no grounds for bail, rules HC

Vasantha.Kumar@timesofindia.com

Bengaluru: The filing of a chargesheet without accompanying paperwork, such as Call Detail Records (CDR) and Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) reports, does not strip it of its character as a final report in the eyes of law, nor does it revive or confer upon the accused a right to claim statutory bail, Karnataka high court observed recently while dismissing the bail petition filed by a 27-year-old man.

Section 193(2) of Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), which mandates the filing of chargesheet within 60 days for certain offences, doesn't mean it can be used by an accused seeking statutory/default bail, the court observed, adding that the objective is the completion of investigation in rape and Pocso cases. It is at best for the benefit of the survivor, Justice M Nagaprasanna pointed out.

The accused, who works as a housekeeping staffer at a private hospital, is said to have had a physical relationship with a colleague despite knowing she was underage. The girl was found to be pregnant when she died by suicide. Her mother registered a police complaint, and an FIR was filed for offences punishable under various sections of BNS, SC/ST Act, and Pocso Act.

On Dec 23, 2025, the special court refused default bail to the accused, who challenged it in the high court, contending that Section 193(2) of BNSS mandates that the chargesheet should be filed within 60 days for the sections invoked. He claimed that in terms of sections 187(3)(ii) and 193(2) of BNSS, the concerned court ought to have granted him statutory bail. He submitted that the chargesheet filed by the officer in charge of the police station was incomplete without an FSL report, DNA report, CDRs or retrieval of mobile phone contents.

On the other hand, police argued that a defective/incomplete chargesheet being filed does not mean the petitioner becomes entitled to the grant of statutory/default bail.

After perusing the materials on record, Justice Nagaprasanna noted that as per the Supreme Court, once a chargesheet is filed within the stipulated period, with all material barring additional reports, the right to statutory bail stands extinguished.

"The criminal process is not a ritual of perfection at its inception; it is an evolving inquiry where additional evidence may surface in the fullness of time," the judge noted.

Inaction costs stamps department ₹25,000

▶ Continued from page 1

In the case heard by Bombay HC, petitioner Kotak Mahindra Bank said it lent money to Electrex (India). Upon failure to repay, it issued a demand notice for Rs 896.4 crore and started proceedings under SARFAESI Act, which allows financial institutions to auction residential and commercial properties of defaulting borrowers to recover their loan outstanding balance.

The bank said it took symbolic possession of secured assets of Electrex (India). In the insolvency proceedings, Bombay HC adjudicated Anant V Hegde, managing director of Electrex (India), and DV Sathe as insolvent.

The bank alleged that even after the court verdict, Hegde travelled to Bengaluru and alienated certain immovable properties, including factory premises situated at Yeshwanthpur, in favour of third parties.

The Bombay high court directed jurisdictional sub-registrars at Vijayanagar, Rajajinagar and Nagarbhavi in Bengaluru to declare all agreements and sale deeds executed by Hegde as null and void, and desist from entertaining any further transactions in respect of the mortgaged properties.

As no steps were initiated despite communication of the Bombay HC's order, Kotak Mahindra Bank approached Karnataka high court.

Justice Sachin Shankar Magadum pointed out that directions issued by Bombay HC were "fully binding" on the registering authorities in Karnataka.

The court imposed costs of Rs 25,000 on the department of stamps for inaction and directed it to consider the bank's representation within four weeks.

Long-term meditation may sharpen brain signals

Chethan.Kumar@timesofindia.com

Bengaluru: A new study by researchers at IISc's Centre for Neuroscience, with contributions from the Department of Physics and the IISc Mathematics Initiative, has found that people who had practised meditation for years showed stronger brain signals linked to attention and perception.

At the centre of the study was the tracking of "gamma waves", electrical rhythms that appear when the brain is actively processing sensory information.

The study noted that even when they were doing nothing in particular, long-term meditators had higher levels of these gamma signals. When shown visual patterns designed to trigger brain responses, their brains reacted more sharply than of non-meditators, specifically in the lower end of the gamma range. In effect, their brains appeared more responsive both at rest and when stimulated.

Signals Tracked With EEG

The research team recorded brain activity using EEG, which tracks electrical signals through sensors placed on the scalp. The team observed more than 70 adults, including long-term practitioners of Rajyoga meditation and a matched group with no meditation experience. Participants were asked to sit through a series of sessions: resting, looking at visual patterns, and meditating — sometimes with their eyes open, which is a feature of Rajyoga practice. This allowed the researchers to compare how the brain behaved across different conditions. The study was led by Ankan Biswas along with Srishty Aggarwal and Kanishka Sharma, under guidance of Supratim Ray at IISc's Centre for Neuroscience. It has been published in the journal, 'Imaging Neuroscience'.

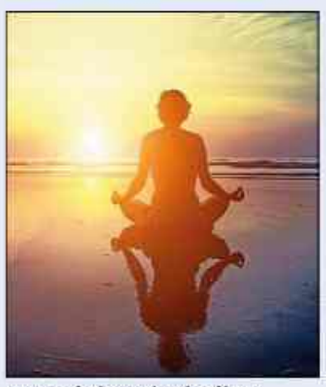
IISC'S LATEST FIND

It could help maintain internal balance

The findings point to a possibility that meditation could help maintain the brain's internal balance, particularly the fine interplay between excitation and inhibition that underlies clear thinking.

Such balance is known to weaken with ageing and in conditions like Alzheimer's disease. While the study does not claim meditation as treatment, it raises the possibility that long-term practice may slow some of these changes.

The researchers also checked whether brain changes were linked to how calm, happy, or mindful participants felt. They were not. In other words, the brain appears to operate independently of how people rate their mental state.



What Stood Out

One of the clearest findings was consistency. Meditators showed stronger gamma activity not just during meditation but before and after it as well.

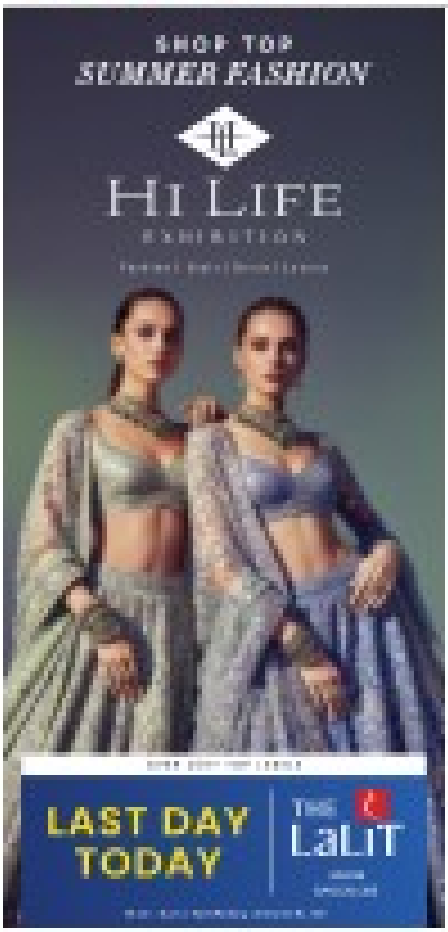
The study also found that two kinds of gamma signals, one triggered by external visuals and another generated internally during meditation, could exist at the same time without interfering with each other. These two signatures were prominent in different brain regions, suggesting they arise from different mechanisms. The study suggests that meditation does not simply "quieten" the mind, as is often assumed. Instead, it may allow different brain processes to run in parallel more efficiently. Another marker the researchers looked at was the overall pattern of brain signals, which tends to flatten with age. In meditators, this pattern remained steeper, a sign often linked to healthier brain function.

AI will do Timothee's job in 10 years, says Charlize

It may happen: Ani on working with Ed Sheeran

Deepika-Ranveer set to welcome baby #2

Pawan Kalyan undergoes surgery, condition stable



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TIMES NATION

THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU | MONDAY, APRIL 20, 2026

RAJNATH SINGH BEGINS 3-DAY GERMANY TRIP TO BOOST DEFENCE TIES; SUBMARINE DEAL LIKELY ON AGENDA

JHARKHAND CM HEMANT SOREN'S CHOPPER DENIED LANDING IN BENGAL'S JHARGRAM OVER NO-FLY ZONE FOR MODI RALLY

HACK OF THE DAY — **TRANSLATE SIGNS AND DOCUMENTS WITH YOUR CAMERA**

WHAT IT SOLVES: Helps you understand menus, medicine labels, forms, posters, notices, and signboards without typing anything manually

WHAT TO DO: Use the Google Translate camera feature when text is visible but not in a language you can read comfortably

STEPS:

1. **Open** the Google Translate app
2. **Pick** the source and target languages
3. **Tap** the camera option
4. **Point** your camera at the text you want translated
5. **Capture** or view the translated text live on screen

NOTE: This is far more useful than people realize for travel, product labels, bills, packaging, and public notices in unfamiliar languages

SCAN FOR MORE

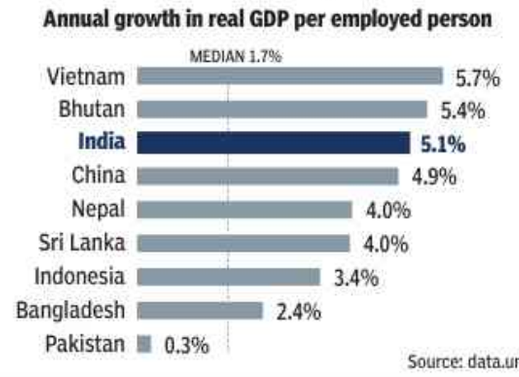
Hacks are based on verified public sources. Readers are advised to follow official websites & updated rules

STATOISTICS A slice of life in numbers

India's worker productivity grew at 3x global median in 2025

Real GDP per employed person rose 5.12% — ranking India 11th out of 181 countries, and nearly three times the median

Annual growth in real GDP per employed person



Source: data.un.org

Delhi proposes BJP neta as Dhaka high commissioner

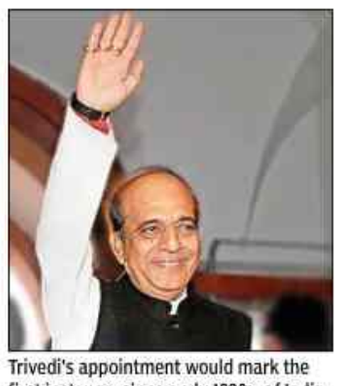
B'desh Nod Awaited For What Would Be A Rare Political Posting

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

News Delhi: India has proposed the name of West Bengal BJP functionary Dinesh Trivedi as the next high commissioner to Bangladesh. According to official sources, Dhaka's approval is awaited for what would be a rare political appointment in the neighbourhood.

Trivedi (75) has served multiple terms as MP in both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, and was also railway minister and minister of state for health. He left TMC in 2021 to join BJP.

If it goes through, the appointment will come at a sensitive moment in the bilateral relationship when both sides are working towards a reset in ties. Following former PM Sheikh Hasina's exit, the relationship descended and entered a period of severe strain characterised by border disputes, trade restrictions and heightened rhetoric.



Trivedi's appointment would mark the first instance, since early 1990s, of India naming a political appointee as an envoy or high commissioner to a neighbour

However, with the new BNP govt settling in, the relationship is beginning to stabilise although differences remain over critical issues like Hasina's continued presence in India and what Dhaka calls border killings by Indian security forces. Foreign minister Khalilur Rahman raised the Hasina issue during his recent "goodwill" visit to India.

Trivedi's appointment will be significant as this will be the first time that India will have a political appointee as an ambassador or high commissioner in the immediate neighbourhood since the early 90s. India had appointed JNU professor Bimal Prasad as ambassador to Nepal in 1991. More recently, in the extended Indian Ocean neighbourhood, India appointed former army chief Dalbir Singh Suhag as high commissioner in Seychelles in 2019. There had been speculation for weeks now about a political appointee for Dhaka.

Hormuz Distress Call Caught On Tape

'You gave clearance... now you are firing... let me turn back'

Samnar Herald returns to the Persian Gulf after a firing incident in the Strait; crew wasn't hurt

Dipak.Dash@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: "Iranian Navy, Iranian Navy. I will alter to starboard and go back, I will alter to starboard and go back, don't fire...Sepa Navy, Sepa Navy, motor tanker Sanmar Herald. Sepa Navy, you gave me clearance, you gave me clearance to go. My name is second on your list, you gave me clearance to go. You are firing now, let me turn back."

The distress call from the captain of Indian-flagged oil tanker Sanmar Herald captured vividly the confusion that ensued during the firing in Strait of Hormuz on Saturday as Iran reimposed restrictions on passage casting a shadow on the ceasefire and the movement of ships through the Strait.

The over two-minute audio recording on Channel 16, the international marine radio frequency dedicated to emergency, distress, safety, and calling, has the captain of the Indian ship appealing to the Iranian navy not to fire and promising to turn back.

Meanwhile, another video recording of the radio communications captured and shared on social media show that Indian cargo ship Bhagya Laxmi was approaching the Strait from UAE waters when it was intercepted. The social media post shows an IRGC operator telling the crew, "Hormuz Strait is blocked and there is no permission for you. You are ordered to go back to your departure immediately." The Iranian Navy personnel also told the captain to wait for permission.

As per Maritime Traffic data, no ship was crossing the crucial global energy choke point as of Sunday evening. The shipping ministry on Sunday said that one Indian Very Large Crude Carrier (VLCC) Samnar Herald and another bulk carrier Jag Arnav, returned to the Persian Gulf following a firing incident while transiting the Strait of Hormuz and no injury to any crew has been reported.

5,446 women to go for Haj sans male companion, most since 2018 policy change

Ambika.Pandit@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: As the first contingent of pilgrims embarked on Haj to Saudi Arabia on Saturday, the overall data shows that as many as 5,446 Muslim women will be travelling as "Ladies Without Mehram" (male companion) for the pilgrimage, with Kerala taking the lead again accounting for 4,477 women in this category.

This is the largest contingent of women in the LWM category since 2018 when policy changes for the first time enabled Muslim women aged 45 years and above, who wish to go for Haj but do not have a male Mehram and their 'school of thought' (Maslak) permits, are allowed to travel in groups of four or more. Single women in the same age group can also apply.

This year a total of 1,75,025 pilgrims are expected to undertake the Haj pilgrimage. Out of the total quota for Union govt, 70% has been allocated to the Haj Committee of India and 30% to Haj Group Organisers. Of the 1.22 lakh pilgrims going for Haj under the Haj committee of India quota, 61,625 are men and 60,810 women including the 5,446 LWM. While Kerala tops the list, Tamil Nadu follows with 368 women in LWM category followed by Karnataka (205).

In 2018 as many as 1,171 women went for Haj in the LWM category.

Of the 5,446 Muslim women travelling without a male companion, 4,477 are from Kerala and 205 from Karnataka

This number was 2,230 in 2019. Thereafter for two years pilgrims did not travel for Haj due to Covid-19 pandemic. In 2022, the LWM category included 1,796 women and this number was 3,950 in 2023 and 4,558 in 2024. Last year 3,266 women went for Haj without mehram.

There are various factors that make Kerala the top state in LWM category. The dominant sect in Kerala is the traditionalist Sunni group, which follows the Shafi'i school of jurisprudence (madhhab) wherein women can undertake Haj without mehram. On the other hand in the rest of India, there is Hanafi-dominated Muslim population where Haj without mehram is traditionally not undertaken. Higher literacy rates among Muslim women in the state with many of them working also act as enabling factors.

Decide on Padma Vibhushan for wrestling legend by May 4: HC

Kolhapur: Bombay high court has directed the Centre to "take an appropriate decision on or before May 4" on conferring the Padma Vibhushan (posthumous) on wrestling legend Khashaba Jadhav, India's first individual Olympic medalist who achieved the feat at the 1952 Helsinki Games, **reports Abhijeet Patil**. The order of the HC's Kolhapur bench came on a PIL filed by Kusteeveer Khashaba Jadhav Foundation, set up by the wrestler's son Ranjeet after his father died in 1984.

In its April 15 order, the bench of Justices Madhav Jamdar and Pravin Patil directed the Maharashtra govt to "comply with any requirements expeditiously". "It is undisputed that Khashaba Dadasaheb Jadhav is India's first individual Olympic medalist," the bench said, fixing the next hearing on May 5.

Ranjeet's case is that Khashaba was denied the Padma honour citing rules that posthumous awards are given within a year of death. Ranjeet had earlier gone from pillar to post to get the recognition for his father. Several MPs had raised the issue in Parliament.

Khashaba received the Arjuna Award in 2001, nearly 17 years after his passing and nearly a half-century after he won the Bronze at the 1952 Olympics.

UP trio beat sister to death after finding her with lover

Lucknow: A woman (19) was beaten to death, allegedly by her three brothers, in a case of suspected "honour" killing after they found her with her boyfriend in UP's Maharajganj, **reports Pathikrit Chakraborty**. One brother is a minor.

Kamlesh, 25, Amlesh, 23, and their 15-year-old brother allegedly thrashed Sangeeta with rods late Friday and burnt her body partially to conceal evidence, police said Sunday after arresting them.

Sangeeta's boyfriend Ravi Kumar Gupta, 22, was also beaten and critically hurt before escaping, only to be chased and beaten unconscious before being dumped near his house. When he regained consciousness, he told his family about the attack and they informed police.

Ex-minister's son & aide held for harassing woman, daughter in UP

Agra: Former cabinet minister Sudhir Balyan's son Aryaman Raghuvanshi, 28, and his associate Surya Gupta, 18, were arrested for allegedly harassing a woman and her daughter when they stepped out for a walk after dinner in UP's Muzaffarnagar. They passed abusive and lewd remarks and when the daughter, in her 20s, started recording the harassment, the men turned aggressive and dared them to call police. They fled after the family came out. TNN

Man sedates, slits throats of twin daughters, calls cops

Kanpur: A man (48) allegedly strangled and slit the throats of his 11-year-old twin daughters after sedating them in Kanpur early Sunday, reports **Faiz Siddiqui**. Shashi Ranjan Mishra, a pharmaceutical businessman, called police around 4.30am, saying, "I have killed my children. Please come."

When police arrived, Mishra's wife, Reshma Kshetri (40), answered the door. On learning of her husband's call, she rushed to his room and found her daughters lying in a pool of blood, with Mishra beside them. Mishra, who had planned suicide but panicked, has been arrested. Police seized a knife; he allegedly suspected his wife's fidelity and had installed CCTV cameras to monitor her.

6-yr-old identifies father's killer, 3 men get life term

Agra: A court in Aligarh has sentenced three men to life for the murder of a private finance company employee, with the victim's six-year-old daughter's testimony playing a key role, **reports Mohammad Dilshad**.

On Jan 20, 2021, Vikas Saxena (24) was at home with his daughter when neighbours scaled the wall, entered and strangled him. His wife was out of town. The case initially puzzled investigators due to no forced entry, but the child recognised one accused neighbour.

Saxena's brother filed a complaint, alleging the accused took gold jewellery and Rs 2 lakh cash. Police arrested Vivek Sharma (25), Mohit Sharma (26) and Yogendra Pandit (25) after the child identified Vivek. Police had also found the stolen items.

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THE TIMES OF INDIA

SPOTLIGHT

pfrda

NPS Insights

What is the National Pension System (NPS)?
NPS is a contributory pension system introduced by the Govt of India in 2004 and regulated & supervised by PFRDA. NPS is mandatory for Central Govt employees (except armed forces) who joined service on or after January 01, 2004. It has been adopted by most State Govts for their employees. NPS is designed to enable disciplined and regular savings during the working life of individuals to ensure a stable and adequate income for post-retirement.

What are the types of accounts in NPS?
Under NPS account there are two types of accounts:
• Tier-I is the Individual Pension Account, which is the default pension account with tax incentives under Income Tax Act.
• Tier-II is an optional investment account available to a subscriber having an active Tier-I account. This account has neither withdrawal restrictions nor tax benefits.

Who all are eligible to open an NPS account?
NPS is voluntary for all Indian citizens including NRIs and OCIs, between the age of 18 to 85 years. Further, NPS Vatsalya scheme has been designed specifically for minors to nurture the culture of saving from an early age and introduce them to financial literacy and to strengthen the concept of long-term financial security. The scheme is available to all Indian citizens including NRIs and OCIs, who are aged below the age of 18.

Subscriber Education and Protection Fund (SEPF) Initiative, by Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority

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Interested participants are requested to confirm their participation by sending their acceptance on or before 23rd April via email or mobile contact provided below.
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Early confirmation is encouraged"
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E-Tender Notice
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The Bidders have to participate through Online E-Procurement website http://etender.up.nic.in. All RFP document can be seen and obtained from website http://etender.up.nic.in. Interested bidders/contractors may view and download RFP document and upload their proposals, duly filled, online as per schedule given below:-

S.No.	Description	Date
1.	Start Date for RFP document download	21-04-26
2.	Date of Pre-bid meeting	27-04-26 @ 12:00 Pm
3.	Last date of Online submission of proposal	05-05-26 @ 05:00 Pm
4.	Opening of Technical proposal	06-05-26 @ 11:00 Am
5.	Opening of Financial proposal	Will be communicate

For the further details contact during office hour on phone number 7080505959.
Additional Municipal Commissioner, Nagar Nigam, Gorakhpur
Municipal Commissioner, Nagar Nigam, Gorakhpur

Beauties sparkle as pageant celebrates spirit of womanhood

Now, Miss India Winners Look At World Stage

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar: For a few hours on Saturday evening, the KIIT Bhubaneswar campus turned into a grand stage. Thirty state winners walked the ramp for the finale of KIIT Bhubaneswar presents 61st Femina Miss India co-powered by Rajnigandha Pearls.

Sadhvi Sail from Goa was crowned Femina Miss India World 2026. She will go on to represent India at the Miss World contest. Rajnandini Pawar from Maharashtra was declared the winner of Femina Miss India 2026 - 1st Runner-Up, and Sree Advaita from Jammu and Kashmir claimed the title of Femina Miss India 2026 - 2nd Runner-Up.

Vineet Jain, Managing Director, Times Group, said, "For over six decades, Femina Miss India has stood for one powerful idea: empowering young Indian women to achieve their true potential and shape their own journeys. This platform has been a launchpad for women who have gone on to make their mark across multiple industries, including cinema, media, entrepreneurship, public service, and global advocacy. Over the years, the pageant has earned India global recognition through winners like Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, Priyanka Chopra, Dia Mirza, Manushi Chhillar and many others, who continue to inspire millions of women. That is the true legacy of Femina Miss India."

The evening featured a mix of fashion, music and performances by actor Ishaan Khatter, singer Jubin Nautiyal and dancer Lauren Gottlieb. It was co-hosted by Maniesh Paul and Sarah Jane Dias.

Opening the showcase, Vishwa Sutra: Weaves of India for the World, spearheaded by the Office of the Development Commissioner (Handlooms), Ministry of Textiles, and designed by Vaishali S, saw the 30 state winners present a tribute to India's handloom heritage. Traditional weaves from across 30 states were reimagined into global silhouettes inspired by 30 countries.

The finale designer round featured a showcase by Vazaneh by Prbhjiit Maniktala.

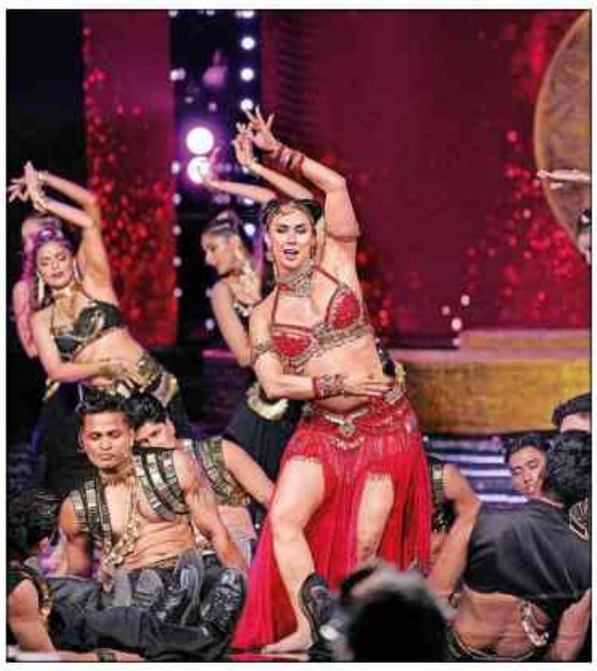
The evening was judged by a panel that included veteran actor Zeenat Aman, filmmaker Madhur Bhandarkar, choreographer and actor Terence Lewis, Femina Miss India 2002 and actor Neha Dhupia, Miss Universe 2001 Runner-Up and actor Celina Jaitly, actor Simran, music composer and singer Amaal Mallik, two-time Olympian and 100m national record holder Dutee Chand, and Miss Diva 2019 and actor Vartika Singh, bringing together voices from across industries.

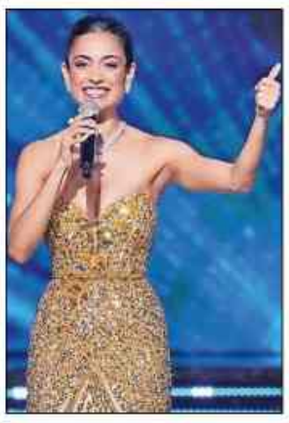
Femina Miss India Sikkim 2026 Passang Deekila Sherpa was announced the winner of the Times Miss Multimedia title, and also emerged as Femina Miss India North East 2026, alongside the other zonal winners: Femina Miss India North 2026 Yashika Sharma, Femina Miss India East 2026 Anushka Sone, Femina Miss India South 2026 Indu Phalguni, and Femina Miss India West 2026 Rajnandini Pawar.

The 61st edition of the pageant kicked off last November with the launch of a nationwide talent hunt to find promising prospects from all corners of the country. The scouting drive and subsequent audition rounds across five zones — North, East, North East, South and West — culminated with the selection of 30 state winners who then underwent a grooming journey through a specialised boot camp in Mumbai, led by industry experts.

This season, the pageant finds its inspiration in 'Connecting the DOTS', where DOTS stands for 'Daughters of This Soil'. Through this initiative, the pageant brings together 30 daughters from 30 states under one unified stage, celebrating the diversity, strength and spirit of womanhood.

As part of the Beauty With a Purpose initiative, the Miss India Organisation, in collaboration with Ketto, a crowdsourcing platform, raised Rs 66,17,295 to support children lacking access to medical aid and education. Femina Miss India Gujarat 2026 Parinaz Cooper, who raised close to Rs 23,61,160, emerged as the highest individual contributor and was awarded the Times Miss Beauty With a Purpose title.





(Clockwise from above) Celina Jaitly, Terence Lewis, Simran, Madhur Bhandarkar, Dutee Chand, Femina Miss India 2026 - 2nd Runner-Up Sree Advaita, Femina Miss India World 2026 Sadhvi Sail, Times Group Managing Director Vineet Jain, Femina Miss India 2026 - 1st Runner-Up Rajnandini Pawar, Zeenat Aman, Neha Dhupia, Vartika Singh & Amaal Mallik at the ceremony; performance by Ishaan Khatter; Lauren Gottlieb's dance act; singer Jubin Nautiyal; co-hosts Maniesh Paul and Sarah Jane Dias

THE WINNERS

FEMINA MISS INDIA WORLD 2026
Sadhvi Sail, Goa; School: Amrita Vidyalayam, Karwar; College: University of British Columbia, Canada

FEMINA MISS INDIA 2026 - 1ST RUNNER-UP
Rajnandini Pawar, Maharashtra; School: Cambridge School, Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar; College: MIT World Peace University, Pune

FEMINA MISS INDIA 2026 - 2ND RUNNER-UP
Sree Advaita, Jammu and Kashmir; School: Kendriya Vidyalaya IIT Chennai; College: Sri Muthukumaran Medical College, Chennai

▶ Watch the finale telecast of KIIT Bhubaneswar presents the 61st Femina Miss India, co-powered by Rajnigandha Pearls, on Friday, May 8 on Zee5, Times Play and the Beauty Pageants YouTube channel. The show will also be aired on Zoom TV on Friday, May 8 at 2 pm

Baisaran valley remains off-limits to tourists as 'red lines' bar access

Open It, People Will Come, Says Taxi Union Chief

Naseer Ganai & Ajay Sura | TNN

Pahalgam: A motorable road from Pahalgam town runs through the mountains to a place known locally as CM's Hut. From there, a roughly 6km trek leads to Baisaran valley, where 26 people were killed and 17 wounded in a terrorist attack last year.

Pahalgam ONE YEAR LATER

At the junction near CM's Hut, the journey stops. Anyone trying to go further along the muddy track is turned back. Police and CRPF personnel appear quickly, reminding visitors the valley is out of bounds. Ponywallahs (local horse guides) do not go beyond this point. They pause while tourists take photographs of the Pahalgam bowl from this vantage point and then head back towards Pahalgam town.

There are no coils of concertina wire, no visible barricade. Police say they want to avoid alarming visitors. But the closure is felt in quieter ways.

Down in the Pahalgam market, pony owners try to motivate visitors to at least go up to the junction viewpoint. Abdul Waheed Wani (39), known locally as "Moulvi Sahab", leads the ponywallahs' union. Standing on the banks of the Lidder, the river that cuts Pahalgam into two, he says Baisaran's closure has changed the town's rhythm. "People come here to see Baisaran and the four valleys around it. When these are closed, they spend a few hours in Pahalgam town and leave," he says.

Around 5,500 ponywallahs depend on tourism, he says. After last year's attack, work stopped for almost seven months. "There was nothing to do. Tourists have now started returning, but it is not like before."

He says visitors still ask about whether they can go to Baisaran. "It feels awkward to tell them it's closed," he says. A year on, he says, the change is still visible. "It is not the same Pahalgam after April 22. Earlier, we could move freely and go anywhere. Now there are red lines. You are held accountable if even your horse crosses a red line."

Outside the main taxi stand, a signboard reads: "Difficult roads often lead to beautiful destinations." The stand is full of taxis and drivers chatting in groups, but only a handful of tourists are around.

Inside the office is Ghulam Nabi Lone. Wearing a *pheran*, a long Kashmiri cloak, and sipping tea, he talks about how he began his career four decades ago driving a military jeep, and then an Ambassador. Now he owns three vehicles and has been president of the taxi stand for nearly 40 years.

He says he has never seen a situation like this in Pahalgam. For seven months after the attack, everything came to a halt. "*Sadakun par ghaas ug aayee thi* (grass had grown on the roads)," he says. "Everything was shut. Only Chandanwari was open for some time. Now that, too, is closed."

Lone says he has raised the issue with officials, including in the recent meeting of senior Army, civil and police officers. "We told them these places, particularly Baisaran, need to open," he says. "If Baisaran opens, tourists will come."

Lone talks about a security row to dispel rumours that Baisaran was opened by J&K's elected govt some months before the attack. He says Baisaran had never been closed before. "Many people asked me to say before the media that it was closed, but I refused. I told them it was never shut before the attack. I even said this at a security meeting," he says.

At Pahalgam police station, officers say there is no clear timeline for reopening Baisaran. They say Chandanwari has been closed for road construction. Some roads lead nowhere.

Bilal Bahadur

There is no concertina wire or barricade; the closure is felt in quieter ways

'These were not ordinary bodies. They had head shots'

▶Continued from P 1

I told her police and administration were on the way," Wani recalls.

Soon after, he sent a message on a WhatsApp group of around 700 ponywallahs, asking them all to come and help. Only about 15 managed to reach the site. Others were stopped by security forces.

"We tried to help the wounded," he says. "Baisaran is a large area and bodies were lying in different places. It took time to bring them together." He pauses, then says: "These were not ordinary bodies. They had head shots."

Some of the voices he heard that day have stayed with him. One woman, he says, refused to leave. "She kept saying, 'My husband is here. We were just walking, taking pictures. Where will I go alone'," he says.

He remembers finding a man among the seven bodies. Alive. "When we touched him, he spoke. He had bullet wounds in his neck and arm. I still remember his voice when he said what had happened to him," he says. "Those words haunt me," he adds.

Wani says they managed to bring some of the wounded down. "We carried one man on our shoulders, then on a charpai. He survived," he says.

The memories weigh heavily on Wani. "Whenever they return — and they do often — I try to keep myself occupied. I move around, find something to do or pick up the phone and call someone," he says.

Bilal Bahadur

Tourists at a memorial to those killed in the terrorist attack

Trip that's more about remembrance, less about leisure

Naseer Ganai & Ajay Sura | TNN

Pahalgam: A year after the terrorist attack that shook Kashmir's scenic hill town, tourist arrivals to Pahalgam, have fallen sharply, dimming the vibrancy of what was once among the region's busiest holiday destinations.

Before the attack, the town routinely hosted between 3,000 and 5,000 visitors a day. Today, the numbers tell a different story. Official figures, procured by **TOI** from the local tourist centre, revealed that from May 2025 to April 15, 2026, Pahalgam recorded 4,30,495 domestic tourists, a steep drop compared to earlier years, when annual footfall ranged between 12 and 15 lakh, with monthly averages hovering around 1 to 1.1 lakh visitors.

The decline is particularly striking when contrasted with April 2025, the month of the attack. By April 22, when the attack took place, around 1.37 lakh tourists had already visited the town in 22 days.

A study of Pahalgam's tourist footfall between the months of Jan and April in 2025 and 2026 shows a drop in numbers. In 2025, the total number of visitors in these four months was 4,63,390. In contrast, data from Jan to April 2026 shows a sharp decline across all months, with just 2,54,930 tourists — almost 45% lower.

Yet, amid the downturn, a new and sombre landmark has emerged. A martyrdom memorial, set up by J&K govt near Pahalgam's popular "Selfie Point" along Lidder river, has become a focal stop for visitors. The memorial bears the names of all 26 people who lost their lives in the attack. For many, the visit is less about leisure and more about remembrance.

Along the riverbanks, tourists gather as they always do, some standing on stones to take pictures, some sitting in groups having snacks, others dipping their feet in water.

However, as they approach the memorial, their expression indicates what has changed in a year. Their mood shifts. Some stand in silence, reading each name written on the memorial. Others raise their phones to capture the sad moment.

The list of 26 people killed begins with Atul Shrikant Mone and ends with Yatish Bhai Sudhirbhai Pamar. At number 22 is Syed Adil Hussain Shah, a local ponywallah killed while trying to save tourists during the attack.

Ravi C, a tourist from Karnataka, said it was his first visit to Pahalgam and he came despite what had happened last year. He was taking pictures of his young child, who was saluting the memorial. Ayaan from Mumbai, travelling with his family, said the violence had not kept him away. "Incidents happen," he said. Kuldeep Singh, a driver from Punjab, had brought visitors from his state. They, too, were reading the names. Kantarajpa, a retired Army officer from Bengaluru, said he wanted to see the place for himself. The attack, he said, has not deterred him.

Across the road at the tourist reception centre, officials from the tourism department said visitors have started returning to Pahalgam. They said in the four months after last year's attack, the resorts saw almost no tourists. "Hoteliers had shut their hotels. But with sustained efforts of govt, things are beginning to improve," said an official.

Tourism infrastructure in the area remains substantial, with around 107 hotels, 100 guest houses, and a similar number of homestays recorded by the tourism department. Officials note that a significant number of unregistered accommodations continue to run outside formal records.

TOURISTS DOWN TO HALF

Month-Year	Tourists	Month-Year	Tourists	Change %
Jan-25	1,10,081	Jan-26	68,667	-38
Feb-25	1,07,405	Feb-26	56,202	-48
March-25	1,08,754	March-26	66,984	-38
April-25	1,37,150	April-26	63,077	-54
Total	**4,63,390**	**Total**	**2,54,930**	**-45**

Source: J&K tourist department

After bill defeat, govt counters Cong 'false narrative' with FAQs

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Govt on Sunday released a set of frequently asked questions on its bill, now defeated in Parliament, for fast-tracking women's quota in legislatures with a 50% hike in Lok Sabha seats, as part of its campaign to debunk what it called a 'false and misleading narrative' by Congress and its allies.

Govt said delimitation was essential to implement women's reservation, and, in light of India's population surging to 140 crore from 54 crore in 1971, it was in the interest of fair representation to increase the number of constituencies to 850.

"No changes were proposed to the Delimitation Commission Act. Any recommendations of the commission would require parliamentary approval and Presidential assent. Ongoing elections, including those in states like Tamil Nadu or West Bengal, would not be affected, as elections up to 2029 will be conducted under the current system," it said.

With southern states leading the campaign against the bill, BJP sent MP Anurag Thakur to Karnataka, where he claimed Congress had exposed its anti-women agenda. "If misogyny was an Olympic sport, Congress would win a gold medal," he said, adding this marked the fifth time Congress and its allies stalled women's reservation. "The narrative claiming south India will suffer is a 100% lie; not a single southern state would lose even a fraction of its proportional voice," he said.

Congress spokesperson Jairam Ramesh said, "Modi govt is on a damage control exercise after its humiliating defeat in LS on April 17. It has released a set of FAQs and answers — not before introducing its bill but after they failed to pass LS."

In answers to 14 questions, govt defended the amendments, noting the original law provides that reservation for women be implemented based on delimitation after the census post-2026. It said, "If govt had waited for the census and subsequent delimitation, women would not have been able to benefit... even in the 2029 elections..."

The proposal to allow 850 seats was based on a proportional expansion approach, govt said. It added that small states would see a uniform 50% increase in seats.

With an expanded house, the number of seats reserved for SCs and STs would have risen significantly, govt said. Rejecting the charge that the bill was aimed at delaying caste census, govt said a time-bound exercise for it had already begun.

Oppn: PM shedding crocodile tears

The opposition on Sunday accused PM Narendra Modi of shedding "crocodile tears" over women's quota, as it stepped up its attack on him for delivering a "political speech in the garb of an address to the nation".

Highlighting that the PM "spewed venom" against the opposition for 29 minutes on Doordarshan, Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinate said, "How could the PM use this platform, funded by taxpayers' money, to push forward his political agenda when the model code of conduct is in effect... How does EC not take suo motu cognisance of exploitation of govt machinery for pure political purpose?"

CPM general secretary MA Baby, in a complaint to CEC Gyanesh Kumar, alleged "serious violation" of the model code of conduct. "The content, tone, and messaging of the address can by no stretch of imagination be termed govt communication. It was blatantly political, targeting the opposition parties... and seeking to influence public opinion, including voters of Tamil Nadu and West Bengal," he said.

CPI's Rajya Sabha MP Sandosh Kumar P also wrote to CEC seeking an inquiry. TNN

Erasing Experience?

Santosh Desai

One can think of modernity as an eraser. We first classify nature as a form of friction. And then set about removing that friction. Hills, heat, crowds, waiting, bad roads, rain, bad air, noise. All the small resistances that once defined what it meant to move through a place are recast as defects in a system that ought to flow and are erased or made irrelevant. In doing so, we erase many other experiences.

CITY CITY BANG BANG

As we examine the progress we have made, we find that what we have been doing, bit by bit, is to erase topography. We are levelling out experience, rounding off its rough edges, losing the texture and specificity of things that limit us, pushing back against the relentless human need to dominate. We are winning that battle, but there is a danger of losing another war.

Take distance. Distance has been one of nature's great constraints. We have found various ways of dismantling this constraint, each with their own characteristics. The train swallows up distances but maintains contact with landscapes. It accepts the obligation of the in-between. The landscape becomes a form of cinema, with the window serving as a screen or perhaps a table on which the topography is served up to us, for visual consumption only.

The flight does something more ambitious. It abolishes the surface altogether. Distance survives only as a number on a screen. We no longer pass through space. We rise above it. The landscape gets reoriented as a form of map rather than a tableau of places.

Highways still negotiate towns and villages. They are forced into compromise with traffic, pedestrians, shops, stray cattle and human unpredictability. They are threaded through the lives of people, sometimes in a messy way. Expressways, on the other hand, adopt a peremptory attitude of dismissiveness— nothing else matters except for the two places they want to connect. The intermediate becomes a form of empty space— distance without any shade of meaning. Only the significant matter—the two presumably large cities that need their own hotline, without acknowledging that others exist.

The other form of distancing happens in the way we travel. Air conditioning, now a standard feature in cars, shields us from the weather outside. We construct our own habitat and become impervious to what lies outside. As we climb the price ladder, outside sounds get muffled, the potholes on the road do not imprint themselves on our spines with quite the same authority, as we wrap our preferred ecology around ourselves. We erase friction, that experiencing of encountering things that our bodies have to adjust to. Instead, the world adjusts itself to our needs. The street is what happens to other people.

The same pattern can be seen, albeit in a different way, when it comes to quick delivery. The friction here is time—between our desire and its fulfilment. Here what we do is to outsource the friction to someone else who undergoes it in a concentrated way. The delivery agent fights through traffic, heat, pollution and rain to meet an arbitrary target that has become a measure of our need. Distance has not been eliminated, but tamed. The topography is someone else's problem.

With pollution, we recede further into our little cocoons. The growing perceived hostility of the outside world contrasts with the ease of having everything come to us. We can do pretty much everything we want without moving out—work, get entertained, shop, connect with friends. The outside world pushes us inwards through fear, the virtual world keeps us in through seduction.

We consume topography and nature through simulated means. Screensavers are aglow with serene pictures of mountains, lakes and vistas of beaches and forests. Digital metaphors all take us back to places we have detached ourselves from. We stream, we use the cloud, we dip into data pools, we surf, we go viral. The digital becomes an extension of the natural, its first cousin. There is no user interface more comforting than nature.

The ordinary experience of being outside becomes unfamiliar. The outside world increasingly becomes either ordeal or adventure. Either you are out because you must, negotiating heat, pollution, traffic, crowds, broken pavements, unreliable transport and time stolen by waiting. Or you are out because you have chosen to curate it, as an experience, framed, filtered and priced. The everyday middle, the unthemed act of simply inhabiting the street, starts to hollow out.

This is where the social cost of frictionless living begins to show itself. The suffering of those without the privilege of escape becomes invisible. Overloaded trains and buses are erased from consciousness, not because they vanish, but because they stop belonging to our lived frame. They become a sign of elsewhereness. The privileged city learns to move above, around and through without contact. Once you are no longer forced to encounter a thing, you soon lose the ability to imagine it.

There is a deeper shift underneath all this. Google does not merely help us find places. It reorganises how space itself is understood. The neighbourhood was a world arranged by proximity, repetition and familiarity. Search rearranges the world by relevance, rating and keywords. You no longer move through space. You jump between intentions. Origin does not matter. Path does not matter. Only the destination does. Geography yields to desire.

Now with AI, the topography of the mind and the messiness of trying to extract coherent thought from within the tangled complexity of neurons are being bypassed. We arrive without travelling, become without striving.

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Ghaziabad encounter: 2 cops injured in firing

▶ Continued from page 1

According to DCP Dhawal Jaiswal, the SWAT team received information on Sunday that the accused was moving through Teela Mod on a motorcycle with two associates. The informer was asked to keep watch on him, while inspector Anil Kumar Rajput and his team were deployed to surround and arrest him.

The team set up checks near Bandhla Nahar cut after learning that the motorcycle was approaching them from the Nahar Patri-Chiraudi/Ratol village side. When cops signalled the bike to stop with torchlight, the riders allegedly opened fire "with intent to kill". The speeding motorcycle skidded off the road as it tried to brake hard, but the men got up, took cover and continued firing with country-made pistols, police said.

The police team returned fire in self-defence, taking cover behind vehicles and on the ground. The child's uncle was hit in both legs and taken to hospital, where he died during treatment. Two others escaped in the dark.

Jaiswal said two policemen — head constables Amit and Iqbal — were injured in the firing, while constable Mohit Sharma was saved by his bulletproof jacket. According to cops, 15 rounds were fired in all.

The accused uncle had been on the run since the child's body was found under a white parked car in Teela Mod earlier this month. Police said they received a 112 call around 8pm that day, by which time the girl had been missing for more than eight hours.

Her family told police she had been playing outside her home around noon, eating ice cream. Only the child and her blind grandfather were at home then. Her parents, both daily wagers, were away at work. The uncle allegedly lured her away by promising to buy her more food.

Police said he had rented a room near the girl's house about a month ago. He allegedly took the child there, raped and strangled her, and later dumped the body under a parked car. The autopsy confirmed rape and death by strangulation.

ED searches home of senior Kol cop in 'laundering scam'

Rohit Khanna & Tamaghna Banerjee | TNN

Kolkata/New Delhi: Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Sunday raided the residence of a Kolkata Police DCP (Special Branch), Shantanu Sinha Biswas and arrested city businessman Joy Kamdar in a money-laundering probe linked to alleged illegal land deals and extortion .

The ED action during the Bengal poll season came days after I-T searches at the home of TMC candidate Debashis Kumar and Miraj Shah, one of CM Mamata Banerjee's nomination proposers in her Bhowanipore seat.

"The house of the person who looks after my security has also been raided since this morning. Do you want to kill me? They are raiding us every day. We will file cases for every single incident," Mamata said at a rally in Tarakeshwar on Sunday.

Kamdar, managing director of several firms largely in real estate, was taken into custody after questioning at ED's office. Searches were carried out at his Behala residence; ED claimed to have recovered Rs 1.2 crore cash. He had earlier skipped two ED summons.

ED sleuths also searched DCP Biswas's Ballygunge home. A former OC of Kalighat Police Station, he was not present. His counsel termed the raids "unanticipated".

The probe stems from alleged illegal land deals and extortion by a syndicate led by history-sheeter Biswajit Podder, aka Sona Pappu. ED said a Toyota Fortuner and a US-made revolver were seized during a recent search.

ED sources said illicit funds were routed through shell and front companies to integrate them into legitimate channels.

Mamata vows jobs for I-PAC staff if they are axed, alleges BJP pressure on ED

Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee pledged Sunday to absorb I-PAC personnel into Trinamool Congress, promising jobs if they are forced out, while accusing BJP of using central agencies to pressure the political consultancy firm engaged by her party, reports **Srishti Lakhotia.** Her claim followed reports that I-PAC's Bengal team had been asked by its HR department to take 20 days' leave, with a review set for May 11, after results on May 4. Trinamool rejected the claims as "completely baseless", saying the team remains fully engaged and campaign operations are continuing. The firm has faced mounting pressure from ED this year over an alleged coal scam. I-PAC director and co-founder Vinesh Chandel was arrested on April 13 in a money laundering case linked to the alleged scam.

ED summons I-PAC director for questioning today: I-PAC director Rishi Raj has been summoned for questioning on Monday in connection with a money laundering probe into funds received from political parties.

Stalin releases manifesto for Chennai, calls it 'DMK fort'

Chennai: Barely four days to go for the assembly elections, chief minister **MK Stalin** released an exclusive manifesto for Chennai on Sunday promising an infrastructure push for the city. Stalin conducted a roadshow in the city later in the day and said Chennai would always be a 'DMK fort'.

Four of the six subheads of the manifesto titled "Chennai Super-6" dealt with civic amenities such as better drinking water supply, street lights, mini buses and storm water drains, while the last two appeared to target youth with a promise of a special centre for artificial intelligence (AI) and a 'global talent gateway'.

The special centre for AI, animation, visual effects, gaming and immersive technologies in Chennai would be set up at an investment of Rs 10,000 crore, the manifesto said. About 20,000 high-paying jobs will be created in these fields, it said. TNN

IG (intel) replaced in Tamil Nadu on EC orders

Chennai: The ECI on Sunday transferred KA Senthilvelan, IG (intelligence) and appointed A Avinash Kumar, IG, Technical Services, in his place in the poll-bound Tamil Nadu.

The poll panel directed chief secretary, M Sai Kumar, not to post Senthilvelan to any election-related posts until the completion of the assembly elections in the state. TNN

कार्यालयः नगर निगम, गोरखपुर

पत्रांकः- 42/मु.अभि./मार्ग-सा.नि.वि./2026-27 दिनांकः 19.04.2026

ई-निविदा सूचना

नगर निगम, गोरखपुर द्वारा नगर निगम के समस्त पंजीकृत/पात्र ठेकेदारों/अनुभवी फर्मों से ई-निविदा के माध्यम से मुख्यमंत्री ग्रीन रोड इन्फ्रास्ट्रक्चर डेवलपमेन्ट स्कीम (अर्बन) फेज 3 के अन्तर्गत 01 कार्य की निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है। शासनादेश सं. 3880/नौ-5-149 सा/2019, नगर विकास अनुभाग-05 उ.प्र. शासन लखनऊ, दिनांक 20 सितम्बर 20.09.2019 के क्रम में उक्त निविदा में नगर निगम, गोरखपुर में अपंजीकृत ठेकेदार भी प्रतिभाग कर सकते हैं। सफल निविदादाता होने पर सम्बन्धित ठेकेदार को नगर निगम, गोरखपुर में पंजीकरण की अर्हता पूर्ण कराकर नगर निगम, गोरखपुर में पंजीकरण कराना होगा। पंजीकरण की अर्हता सम्बन्धी विवरण/आवश्यक प्रपत्र की सूचना किसी भी कार्य दिवस में नगर निगम कार्यालय के निर्माण विभाग में देखी जा सकती है। ई निविदा प्रपत्र उ.प्र. की ई प्रोक्योरमेन्ट की वेबसाइट http://etender.up.nic.in पर देखी जा सकती है। शासनादेश सं. 4848/नौ-5-2018-470सा/2018 नगर विकास अनुभाग 5 उ.प्र. शासन, लखनऊ दिनांक 10 दिसम्बर, 2018 के क्रम में निविदा शुल्क-जी.एस.टी. एवं धरोहर धनराशि वेबसाइट http://etender.up.nic.in पर ही ऑनलाइन के माध्यम से जमा की जायेगी। ई निविदाएं निम्नानुसार आमंत्रित की जाती है:-

क्र.सं.	नगर निगम	पैकेज सं.	अन्तर्निहित कार्य	मार्ग की लम्बाई मी.में	अनुमानित लागत जी.एस.टी. रहित (रु. लाख में) निर्माण	5 वर्षों का अनुरक्षण	कार्य की सम्पूर्ण अनुमानित लागत (रु. लाख में)	निविदा धरोहर धनराशि (लाख रु. में)	कार्य पूर्ण करने की अवधि (माह में)	निविदा प्रपत्र का मूल्य जी.एस.टी. सहित (रु.)
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1	गोरखपुर	GKP/CMG/Ph03-01	गणेश चौक से यूनिवर्सिटी चौराहा एवं असुरन नेताजी से [illegible] नगर तिराहे तक।	1640	3388.32	44.60	3432.90	69.00	15	35400.00

ऑनलाइन निविदा का विवरण

क्र.सं.	विवरण	दिनांक एवं समय
1	वेबसाइट से ई-निविदा डाउनलोड करने की तिथि	21.04.2026
2	प्री बिड मीटिंग	
3	ई-निविदा अपलोड के अन्तिम तिथि/समय	28.04.2026 @ 05:00PM
4	ई-निविदा खोले जाने की तिथि/समय	29.04.2026 @ 11:00AM

कार्य का विवरण, नियम व शर्तें नगर निगम, गोरखपुर की वेबसाइट https://gorakhpurnagarnigam.up.gov.in गोरखपुर पर व ई-प्रोक्योरमेन्ट की वेबसाइट http://etender.up.nic.in पर उपलब्ध है साथ ही नगर निगम कार्यालय के नोटिस बोर्ड पर चस्पा कर दी गयी है। किसी भी परिवर्तन, संशोधन व अतिरिक्त सूचनाओं के लिये उक्त वेबसाइट एवं नोटिस बोर्ड पर देखी जा सकती है।

मुख्य अभियन्ता
नगर निगम, गोरखपुर

34001/80/2627 e-mail ID - supenger_rbjyp@yahoo.co.in

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER,
JEYPORE (R&B) CIRCLE, JEYPORE
INVITATIONS FOR BIDS (IFB)
Bid Identification No. C.C.E.J.C (R&B) - 03/2026-27

No.2928 Date. 15.04.2026

1.	Nature of the work	DEVELOPMENT & BUILDING WORKS
2.	Total No. of Works	06 (Six) Nos.
3.	Tender cost	Rs. 2.39 Crs. to 9.78 Crs.
4.	Period of completion	07 (Seven) to 11 (Eleven) Calendar Months each.
5.	Cost of Bid Document	Rs. 10,000/-
6.	Bid Security (EMD)	Rs. 2.39 Lacs to 9.78 Lacs as per column no. 06 of IFB.
7.	Class of Contractor	"B", "A" & "Special" Class as per Cl no. 05 of TCN & according to Financial Eligibility.
8.	Date & time of availability of bid Document in the portal	from 12:00 hours of 24.04.2026 to 17:00 hours of 08.05.2026
9.	Last date/Time for receipt of bids in the Portal	17:00 hours of 08.05.2026
10.	Opening date of Bid	09:00 hours of 11.05.2026
11.	Name and address of the Officer Inviting Bid	Chief Construction Engineer, Jeypore (R&B) Circle, Jeypore

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal **https://tendersodisha.gov.in**
Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website only.

Sd/-
Chief Construction Engineer
Jeypore (R&B) Circle, Jeypore
OIPR-34001/34108/1/26-27/0005

32001/80/2627

GOVERNMENT OF ORISSA
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES
OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER
EASTERN MINOR IRRIGATION CIRCLE, KEONJHAR
e-Mail ID : seemickeonjhar@gmail.com
"e" Procurement Notice
No. 290 Dated 18.04.2026
BID IDENTIFICATION NO- Addl. C.E EMIC No.- 01/EMIC/2026-27

The Additional Chief Engineer, Eastern Minor Irrigation Circle, Keonjhar on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites **percentage rate bids in Double cover only in ONLINE mode** for the works detailed in the table from **"A" Class** Contractors registered with the State Government and contractors of equivalent Grade/ Class registered with Central Government/M.E.S./Railways for execution of civil works on production of definite proof from the appropriate authority. The bidders may submit bids for any or all of the works.

1	Name of the work	Construction of Begnaghai MIP (D/W-Piano Key Type) across Barijori Nallah near village Brahmanigaon in Keonjhar Block of Keonjhar District under WSIDP for the year 2026-27.
2	Total No. of work	01 (One) no.
3	Estimated Cost	Rs. 405.084 lakh Approximately (Detail list of work Annexed)
4	Class of Contractor	Class "A"
5	Period of completion	As Mentioned against Work.
6	Date & time of Availability of Bid Document in the portal for online bidding.	23.04.2026 at 10.00 AM to 11.05.2026 up to 5.00 P.M.
7	Last date/Time for receipt of Bid only in ONLINE.	11.05.2026 up to 5.00 P.M.
8	Date/Time of Opening of Technical Bid	12.05.2026 at 11.00 A.M. at Office of the Addl. Chief Engineer, Eastern M.I Circle, Keonjhar through Website
9	Date/Time of Opening of Financial Bid	To be intimated online after offline evaluation of Technical Bids.
10	Date of Transparent Lottery (If cases arise)	To be intimated through mail after offline evaluation of Financial Bids.
11	Name & Address of the Officer Inviting the Bid.	Additional Chief Engineer, Eastern M.I. Circle, Keonjhar At/Po-Keonjhar Dist: Keonjhar PIN- 758001 E-Mail:- **seemickeonjhar@gmail.com**
12	Mode of Payment of Bid Cost	Online

13. Further details can be seen from the "e" Procurement Portal **https://tendersodisha.gov.in.**

OIPR-32001/32270/1/26-27/0001

Tender advertisement for the Vasantrao Naik State Agricultural Extension Management Training Institute (VANAMATI), Nagpur, under the Hon. Balasaheb Thackeray Agri- Business and Rural Transformation Project (SMART).

Vasantrao Naik State Agricultural Extension Management Training Institute (VANAMATI)
VIP Road Dharampeth Nagpur M.S. 440010 Email: sameti123@yahoo.co.in
Website: www.vanamati.in

E-TENDER NOTICE NOS: 2026_DOA_VANAMATI_1_and_2
(Supply and Installation of IT Hardware and Software (RFB No. IN-PCMU-SMART-521457-GO-RFB) and Multimedia, AV & Presentation Equipment (RFB No. IN-PCMU-SMART-521461-GO-RFB)

The Government of Maharashtra is implementing the World Bank funded Hon. Balasaheb Thackeray Agri- Business and Rural Transformation Project (SMART), VANAMATI, Nagpur being one of the implementing agencies of the project; invites online bids for above mentioned goods on https://mahatenders.gov.in. The bid document is also available on the website www.smart-mh.org and www.vanamati.in in tender and procurement section. The last date for submission of online bid is 20/05/2026 up to 02.00 PM. Any updates or notices shall be published on https://mahatenders.gov.in only.

DGIPR/2026-2027/301 Director, VANAMATI, Nagpur

GUJARAT STATE ELECTRICITY CORPORATION LTD.
GSECL
Vidyut Bhavan, Race Course, Vadodara, India - 390007.
Ph. 91 265 6612004, Fax: 91 265 2340596
CIN: U40100GJ1993SGC019988
e-mail: gmf.gsecl@gebmail.com Website: www.gsecl.in

Tender Notice GeM Bid No. GEM/2026/B/7439769

General Manager (F&A) & CFO, Gujarat State Electricity Corporation Limited, Vadodara, invites online tenders (e-tenders) for the following Work

E-Tender on GeM Portal vide GeM Bid No. GEM/2026/B/7439769 for Mega Risk Policy and Standard Fire & Special Perils Insurance Policies with Add-On cover of earthquake.

The Tender documents of above are available on website https://gem.gov.in (for viewing, downloading and online submission) and on web Site www.gsecl.in (for viewing and downloading only). Interested bidders are requested to visit the above websites to download the tender documents and obtain complete details regarding tender fee, Earnest Money Deposit (EMD), General Terms & Conditions (GTC), Additional Terms & Conditions (ATC), technical specifications, GTP, and the due date for submission of bids.

Technical bid containing all the relevant documents of tender to be submitted through ONLINE process only on https://gem.gov.in. Any other document will not be accepted in Offline OR Hard Copy.

Note: Be in touch with our Web Site till Bid opening

-Sd/- General Manager (F&A) & CFO,
Gujarat State Electricity Corporation Limited

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(ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರದ ಉದ್ಯಮ)
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Ph/ Fax: 08228-268378,
e-mail: xekrdhdk@yahoo.com

ಸಂ: ಕಾ.ಇಂ/ಕ.ಜ.ವಿ/ಯೋ.ಶಾ/ ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಪ್ರಸಂ.01/2026–27 ದಿ: 16.04.2026

ಅಲ್ಪಾವಧಿ ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ: 01/2026–27, ದಿನಾಂಕ: 16.04.2026

(ಕೆಪಿಪಿ ಪೋರ್ಟಲ್ ಮೂಲಕ)

ವ್ಯವಸ್ಥಾಪಕ ನಿರ್ದೇಶಕರು, ಕಾವೇರಿ ನೀರಾವರಿ ನಿಗಮ ನಿಯಮಿತ ಇವರ ಪರವಾಗಿ ಕನಿಷ್ಠ ಮೊತ್ತ ರೂ.1.90 ಲಕ್ಷ ಮತ್ತು ಗರಿಷ್ಠ ಮೊತ್ತ ರೂ.65.85 ಲಕ್ಷದ ಒಟ್ಟು 15 ಕಾಮಗಾರಿಗಳನ್ನು ಅರ್ಹ ವರ್ಗದ ನೊಂದಾಯಿತ ಗುತ್ತಿಗೆದಾರರು/ ಸಂಸ್ಥೆಯವರಿಂದ ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಆಹ್ವಾನಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ. ಕೆ.ಪಿ.ಪಿ ಪೋರ್ಟಲ್ ನಲ್ಲಿ ಟೆಂಡರ್‌ಗೆ ಅರ್ಜಿ ಸಲ್ಲಿಸಲು ಕಡೆಯ ದಿ: 24.04.2026 ಸಾ:5.30 ಗಂಟೆವರೆಗೆ ಮತ್ತು ಬಿಡ್ಡು ತೆರೆಯುವ ದಿ: 27.04.2026ರ ಬೆ:10.30 ಗಂಟೆ ನಂತರ ನಿಗಧಿಪಡಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ. ಟೆಂಡರ್ ವಿವರಗಳನ್ನು ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರದ ಕೆಪಿಪಿಪಿ ವೆಬ್‌ಸೈಟ್ https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in/kppp ನಿಂದ ದಿ: 17.04.2026 ರಿಂದ ಡೌನ್‌ಲೋಡ್ ಮಾಡಿಕೊಳ್ಳಬಹುದು. ಸರ್ಕಾರದ ಪತ್ರ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ ಜಸಂಇ 94, ಎಂಬಿಐ 2017 ದಿ: 29.07.2017ರ ಅಧಿಸೂಚನೆಯನ್ವಯ ಮೀಸಲಾತಿ ನಿಯಮ ಪಾಲಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ. ಹೆಚ್ಚಿನ ವಿವರಗಳನ್ನು ಈ ಕಛೇರಿಯಿಂದ ಪಡೆಯಬಹುದಾಗಿದೆ.

ಸಹಿ/– ಕಾರ್ಯಪಾಲಕ ಇಂಜಿನಿಯರ್,
ಕಬಿನಿ ಜಲಾಶಯ ವಿಭಾಗ, ಕಬಿನಿ ಕಾಲೋನಿ.

DIPR/DDMYS/72/KSMCA/059/2026-27

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When you're accustomed to privilege, parity and equity and equality may feel like oppression

– RAPHAEL WARNOCK

Strait Talk

World can't be held to ransom for Iran's uranium. Opening Hormuz should be Trump's priority

Last year, world economy grew 3.4%, a modest increase despite Trump's tariffs. In Jan, IMF predicted 2026 would also be a 3.4% year. Now, it has revised its estimate downward to 3.1%, but its chief economist sees 2.5% as a likelier number. What's changed is the Hormuz crisis: the biggest energy shock in history. For the past 50-odd days, oil and gas have barely trickled out of the Gulf. Unable to move oil and gas via Hormuz Strait, Gulf nations have scaled back production. By one estimate, 500mn barrels of oil output, worth $50bn, and enough to last US a month, has been lost. No LNG has crossed Hormuz in this period. Plus, shortages of fertiliser, aluminium, helium and sulphur – in turn affecting production of copper and nickel – have emerged. If this continues, world growth may slow to 2%.

That's why opening Hormuz at the earliest is essential. And the only way to do it, permanently, is through talks with Iran. US and Israel have already seen the consequences of unprovoked war. Their strikes may have berthed Iran's navy on the seafloor, but it's still got enough gunboats to cause harm, as we saw on Saturday, when two India-flagged vessels were attacked. Iran has missiles and drones too. What force might not achieve for another month, or six, talks can do now. In fact, last week started well after the first round of US-Iran talks, followed by Israel-Lebanon ceasefire, and Iran's unexpected suspension of its own blockade, on Friday. Oil prices eased and stock markets soared. But now, after Iran's gunboat action, we're starting another week with trepidation.

The air is tense also because US-Iran ceasefire runs out on Wednesday. Both sides keep claiming good "progress" in talks, but the fate of Iran's uranium stockpile remains a sticking point. As for Hormuz, when Iran relented on Friday, couldn't US have played ball? Relentless humiliation of your opponent is hardly the way to swing a deal. It was an opportunity to normalise traffic through Hormuz – something US shouldn't forget in its pursuit of Iran's uranium. Until sea traffic returns to normal, Gulf states won't start pumping oil and gas at their old rates, shortages of aluminium, sulphur, etc, won't ease, and world economy will continue limping. Trump has already rescheduled his meeting with Xi once. If he expects a hero's welcome in China mid-May, he better unlock Hormuz fast.

By JNU, For JNU

Quota for teachers' kids is insider advantage, and unfair, in a uni otherwise known for being progressive

JNU is adding seats, 5% more, for its undergraduate and postgraduate courses. That's great. Every bit counts – around 16L registered for CUET last year. But wait, there's a catch. The JNU seat-increase is only for teaching staff's wards. It's a supernumerary quota, which means seats added to existing intake, for college employees' kids. When admission to colleges is so fraught – a poorly conceived CUET, and its nightmarish implementation making matters worse – such a quota is disquieting. JNU already has a supernumerary quota in place for non-teaching staff – a janitor's kid getting a leg-up is, still, understandable. But this new quota is meant only for wards of teaching staff – a privileged group by any measure, both economically, and by social capital.

It's also jarring because JNU is the cream of central universities – long ranked as India's best or second-best university by NIRF, and its earlier avatar NAAC. It sets precedent. It boasts an enviable teacher/student ratio of 1:14. Its pluralistic character, truly representative of all parts of India, has been its strength, and its affirmative-action approach extended to even student admissions. Its unusual admission policy awarded 'deprivation points', to candidates from backward districts, women, transgenders etc – allowing for layered diversity on-campus. There are many aspects of JNU worth emulating, but this new 5% quota for teachers' kids does not pass any test. It only institutionalises insider advantage.

Constitutionally mandated reservations for SCs and STs are understandable. But the push for education quotas by various groups, beyond OBCs, barely masks institutions' total failure to expand, and meet the ever-growing demand for higher education. To add to that hurt, a teachers' quota? By all means, expand. But don't hog seats. Make the expansion, even if it's a single seat per programme, part of the total university intake.

Small blue dot

On raising free-range kids, with GPS's help

Arnab Ray

My daughter turned thirteen this year. Which means she is now old enough to go out on her own. Whether it's school-supervised excursions (the bus drops her back at school at 7pm), or hanging out with friends at the mall.

I am the parent-Uber, pulling up to the mall entrance, and watching her disappear into the crowd, without a backward glance. Then, my wife and I also enter this mall, and just 'casually' shop around, being careful not to run into my daughter, because that would be embarrassing for her, in front of her friends, and embarrassing for me, since I said I would be going back home.

This means my transformation into my own parents has hastened. But I have tools my mother did not have, chief among them being the location of my daughter's phone, which she believes I have turned on for 'the day', but which is actually on 'indefinitely'.

I tell her to be careful crossing the street, not to get into any trouble, not to lose her money, and definitely not the phone. But more than the worrying, I am happy. For so long, she has seen the world through us, going where we went, eating what we ate, following the decisions we took. Her map was our map. Now, her world is slowly diverging from ours, text by text, inside joke by inside joke. And I am happy that it is so, for that is how it has always been.

I am sad too. For I know what this is: the beginning of her moving away. The only thing I can do is to close my eyes, be mindful of it all, and recognise the value of every moment that I have with her, before they, too, are gone, till all I will have left are memories in an empty nest.

But most of all, I am thankful. I am thankful for this precise bittersweet emotion, of proudly watching my child slowly fluttering her wings, waiting to fly, knowing that she will meet headwinds along the way, but that she will find her way still, riding the slipstreams, and make her own nest somewhere, and then track locations of her own. Because love, it turns out, is a blue dot on a map through space and time.

Skirting The Women's Quota

Change didn't happen, thanks to wrangles on delimitation. Point is, if govt didn't add its 50% formula to the bill, neither did opposition push an amendment to delink 33% from delimitation

Arghya Sengupta

There was a moment, during the debate in Parliament on women's reservation and delimitation constitution amendments, when it looked like better sense might prevail. Home minister said, an official amendment was ready, providing for a uniform 50% increase in seats for all states, which could be circulated within an hour. But neither did the House adjourn, nor was the amendment circulated.

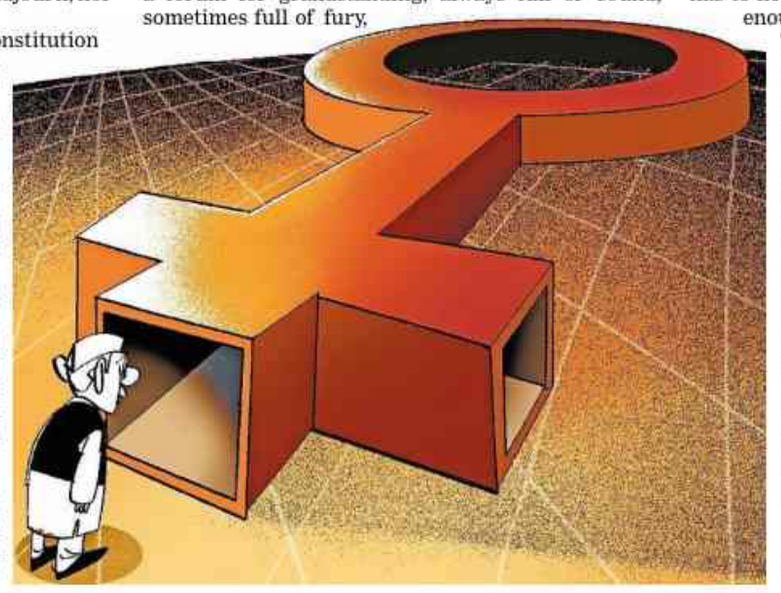
Just as surprisingly as the constitution amendment was introduced – all of a sudden, in a special session – equally surprisingly, it was speedily defeated, failing to get the 2/3rds majority needed. This was Parliament at its best and worst.

One hundred and thirty members spoke, some in favour of the bill, some against. Support for reservation of seats for women was unanimous – no mean political feat in a deeply patriarchal society. Representatives of small territories like Daman and Diu and Sikkim pleaded for greater representation. Bigwigs from govt and opposition traded arguments interspersed with light-hearted banter. With its final vote, Parliament reaffirmed its fundamental function – to act as a check and balance on a powerful executive.

Equally, it felt like a bill set up to fail. Only three days of debate were set aside, for the largest redrawing of electoral constituencies in over half a century. No papers were circulated earlier, no all-party meetings, no public consultations. No official amendments were publicly made available.

Sample this – a simple deletion of Article 334A of the Constitution, which linked women's reservation to delimitation would have: (a) implemented women's reservation with immediate effect; and (b) kept the delimitation issue open for a later date. Yet, no such amendment was forthcoming. Those seen to be supporting the bill, didn't seem to believe in women's reservation strongly enough on the floor of the House. Those opposing it seemed to believe in women's reservation on the floor of the House, but not enough to negotiate a compromise to make it work.

The irony of this entire episode is that the debate was about enlarging a withering institution. For an institution that is meant to debate laws and constrain govt, Parliament has forsaken this role for some time now. In just the last two years, Lok Sabha has been adjourned due to disruptions for roughly a third of its scheduled time, with some sessions losing more than 50% of working hours. When it does work, it rarely has substantive debates on bills – few bills, in recent memory, have been amended on the basis of a debate on the floor of the House. Parliament has become a forum for grandstanding, always full of sound, sometimes full of fury, rarely signifying much.



As a national institution, it is also expensive. By a conservative assessment, each MP costs the taxpayer a minimum of ₹5.5cr per year. Multiply that by 300 MPs – the proposed increase – and one could run four new AIIMS, annually, in that budget. As framers of our Constitution had noted, political representation is useless, without good health and a full belly.

Despite this, a new composition of 850 MPs was pressed upon. Why 850? No clear answers were provided. Population on the basis of which seats would be allocated to states would neither be the 1971 census nor the ongoing one, but the 2011 one? Again, why? No answers were forthcoming.

Equally, for the opposition which steadfastly opposed delimitation in the guise of women's reservation, why not introduce an amendment that severs this linkage? Were they opposed to delimitation itself, or just the way govt was proposing to do it? With the exception of DMK, the answer wasn't quite clear.

This, ultimately, was the irony of ironies. Delimitation cannot be stalled forever. If Parliament has to heed the voice of the people, there have to be enough people in Parliament for the purpose. That the southern states have fewer people cannot be a *brahmastra* to stop delimitation for all times to come. Govt was justified in attempting to set up and expedite the process of delimitation.

Equally, there was need for a legislative package, by which, concomitant with any increase of seats in Parliament, southern states are compensated for any proportionate losses, and parliamentarians themselves are held to higher standards of account. This includes performance evaluation of parliamentarians, tracking their attendance and docking salaries for non-attendance, as well as a detailed audit of their expenses.

It was clear from the strategic tagging of delimitation with women's reservation and its ultimate defeat that the nation may be ready for a new Parliament building, but not necessarily for a new Parliament to represent a new, more populous India.

The upshot – the historic all-party consensus on women's reservation in Parliament brought about through the constitution amendment in 2023, has now been substantially undone. For at least the next five years, issue of women's reservation has been resurrected as a poll issue. It was always too valuable, politically, to let go of it, once and for all. Expect lots of loud signalling on which party actually cares more for women's reservation in the next few polls.

As for women, new India hasn't changed in one way from the old. Like Sita in the *treta yug*, time of the Ramayan, women remain powerful symbols to be fought over, by warring groups, led by men. Difference is, that this time, the enemies do not lie across our shores, they lie within us.

The writer is Research Director, Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy. Views are personal

'Disorder Iran Is Sowing...Travels Into Markets & Households'

Blockade of Hormuz hurts world's poor most, because cost of living has shot up, and food security is at risk. UAE envoy to India argues for a resolution that ensures Hormuz is never weaponised again

Abdulnasser Alshaali

Strait of Hormuz is 21 nautical miles – about 39km – wide at its narrowest point. Through it flows 20% of world's oil, quarter of its gas, and fertilisers that feed billions. It's the most consequential stretch of water on Earth, and it's currently being held hostage by Iran.

The implications extend far beyond the Gulf. As PM Modi and Indian officials have noted, disruption to this corridor has direct consequences for energy prices, food security, and cost of living for families across the region and beyond.

Since Feb 28, at least 22 ships have been attacked in Arabian Gulf's waters. Ten crew members have been killed at sea, around 20,000 seafarers are unable to transit safely, and an estimated 800 commercial vessels are stranded, including almost 400 tankers. Every vessel stranded is a shipment delayed, every delayed shipment means a higher price, and price rise lands hardest on those least able to absorb it.

These are not abstract statistics. These are ships that carry oil, gas, and critical inputs on which economies across Asia depend. India is world's third-largest importer of crude oil, and Indian officials have highlighted that critical supplies, including LPG and fertiliser inputs, depend on safe passage through the Strait. The disorder Iran is sowing does not stop at the shores of the Gulf. It travels up supply chains, into markets, and into every household.

UAE and India have spent years building foundations of a genuine and integrated economic relationship. UAE-India Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) was built on a single founding conviction – the closer our two economies are bound together, the more prosperous people on both sides become. That partnership today represents $100bn in annual bilateral trade. It means Indian exporters reach UAE and international markets faster; UAE investment flows into Indian infra, technology, and manufacturing; and jobs, growth, and opportunity run in both directions. Every part of that architecture depends on free movement of goods through Hormuz.

Iran's blockade is not an attack on a distant shipping lane, it's an attack on the global economy. Every escalation, stranded tanker, and disrupted supply chain creates real and growing uncertainty for communities that depend on it. Iran's terrorist campaign of missiles, drones, and economic warfare and piracy, is a direct threat to the financial lifeline that has been built around the world, and to the broader ties we have nurtured, together.

Image: AI

PM Modi has spoken with clarity. India's co-sponsorship of UN Security Council Resolution 2817, joining 136 nations in demanding an end to these attacks, was a statement of principle from a nation that understands what is at stake. This position forms part of a broader and unequivocal international response.

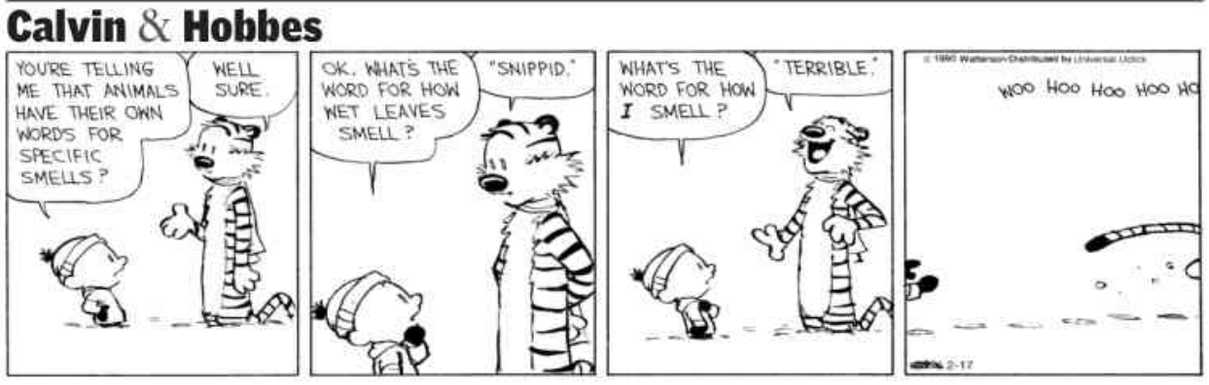
In addition to the Security Council resolution, Human Rights Council has called for accountability and reparations for victims, including those affected by attacks on energy systems and essential services. International Maritime Organisation, supported by more than 115 member states, has condemned threats to maritime security, and reaffirmed the imperative of safeguarding freedom of navigation in Strait of Hormuz, while International Civil Aviation Organisation has warned of serious risks posed to global aviation safety. Taken together, these actions reflect a clear and unified message from the international community.

A temporary ceasefire is a pause, not a resolution. Tankers remain stranded, and pressures on communities around the world will only continue to build. In this regard, we are closely monitoring the ceasefire between US and Iran, after the announcement by President Trump. UAE is also seeking additional clarification on its terms to ensure Iran's full adherence to an immediate halt to all hostilities across the region, as well as complete and unconditional reopening of Strait of Hormuz.

What is required is a firm and principled position, including ensuring that Iran is held accountable and fully liable for damages and reparations. Also required is a conclusive outcome that addresses Iran's full range of threats: nuclear capabilities, missiles, drones, affiliated terrorist proxies, and accountability for the destruction Iran has wrought. That outcome should include ending threats to freedom of navigation, as well as economic warfare and piracy in Strait of Hormuz.

It's essential that we ensure that any resolution to this war is durable, that accountability is real, and that Strait of Hormuz is never again subject to threats of a terrorist regime that has shown utter contempt for international law and welfare of billions.

Calvin & Hobbes



Sacred*space*

Among a man's many good possessions, a good command of speech has no equal. Prosperity and ruin issue from the power of the tongue. Therefore, guard yourself against thoughtless speech.

Thiruvalluvar

Karm: Every Action Leaves An Imprint

XIV The Dalai Lama

The law of karm is one of the most essential principles in Buddhist thought, yet it is often misunderstood. Karm, from the Sanskrit word meaning 'action', refers to the natural law of cause and effect. It is not a system of divine reward or punishment, but a principle that governs the unfolding of experience through our intentional thoughts, words, and deeds. Understanding karm helps us take greater responsibility for our lives.

Instead of blaming others or relying on luck, we come to see that our present circumstances have been shaped by our past actions. Just as seeds planted in the earth bring forth corresponding fruits, so too do our intentions create our future. This is not meant to induce guilt, but to empower. We can shape what comes next by choosing how we act now.

Karm is not fate. It does not mean our lives are predetermined. Each intentional act plants a seed in the mind. When the right conditions arise, that seed will ripen, bringing about joy, sorrow, or neutrality. Actions rooted in kindness, generosity, and wisdom bring happiness. Those driven by hatred, greed, or ignorance lead to suffering. The key is intention. A small act done with a pure heart can bring great benefit. A grand gesture motivated by ego may yield little.

There is no judgement in this process-only natural consequence. Just as no one is blamed when a thorn bush grows from a thorn seed, the universe does not punish or reward. Traditional teachings outline four key principles: Karm is definite – positive actions bring positive results, and harmful actions bring suffering. Karm multiplies – even small actions can grow over time. No result without cause – nothing arises without a cause. If we want happiness, we must create its conditions. Karm does not disappear – every action leaves an imprint unless it is purified.

These principles remind us that we are not victims of circumstance. We carry the tools for our transformation. Intention, chetana, is the seed of karm. Two similar acts may bear vastly different results depending on the mind that guides them. Because karm originates in the mind, cultivating a kind and ethical heart is essential. Even if we cannot act outwardly, thoughts of compassion still generate beneficial karm.

THE SPEAKING TREE

Karm brings results in three main ways: Fully ripened results determine the realm or conditions of our rebirth. Results similar to the cause appear as habits – truthfulness begets honesty, and cruelty, more cruelty. Environmental results shape the world around us, harmful deeds may lead to harsh conditions, while virtue brings harmony. These patterns teach us to live thoughtfully and ethically.

Karm is not fixed. Just as a seed will not sprout without the right conditions, karmic imprints can be purified before they ripen. The Buddha taught methods such as sincere regret, refuge in the Three Jewels, recitation of mantras, meditation, and developing compassion. While karm is personal, it operates within the web of interdependence. Our lives are shaped not only by our actions, but also by others and the world around us. Still, we have the freedom to choose how we respond. That choice is powerful. Wisdom shows us the empty, interconnected nature of reality. Compassion moves us to use this understanding for the benefit of all. Every moment is an opportunity to speak kindly, act ethically, and think with care. Even a single act of compassion may ripple outward beyond what we can imagine.

As told to Rajiv Mehrotra

'India and Korea can give new direction to multilateralism amid mounting challenges'

In an exclusive interview to **TOI's Sachin Parashar** *and* **Alpyu Singh**, *South Korean President* **Lee Jae Myung** *shared his vision for the special strategic partnership with India in key areas like trade, technology, critical minerals, defence and shipbuilding in which Seoul is a global leader. Excerpts:*

The Republic of Korea fully supports India's 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' initiative. It is a plan of significant industrial and economic potential... However, self-reliance is difficult to achieve entirely on one's own. Korea's rapid industrial development and economic growth were made possible through considerable support and assistance from partner countries. In this regard, Korea seeks to serve as India's key partner in advancing the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' initiative. In particular, the K9 Vajra howitzer project stands as an exemplary case of our bilateral defence and defence industry cooperation

TOI INTERVIEW

This is your first visit to India as president. How do you hope to further strengthen the special strategic partnership with India in the current circumstances, especially in key areas like trade and critical and emerging technology?

■ India — the world's most populous country, the fourth-largest economy, and a leading voice of the Global South — is an ideal partner for the Republic of Korea. Our partnership rests not only on highly complementary economies but also on shared core values of democracy and a market economy.

At a time of heightened geopolitical uncertainty and mounting challenges to multilateralism, it is more imperative than ever that Korea and India work closely together as emerging global leaders. Building on our special strategic partnership, we will deepen comprehensive ties of cooperation that drive mutual growth and innovation while expanding our strategic horizons.

A key priority is accelerating negotiations to upgrade the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA). Beyond traditional sectors such as electronics and automobiles, we will broaden cooperation into shipbuilding, finance, and the defence industry, bringing to life the vision of "Make in India, Together with Korea.

We will also step up collaboration in AI and digital technologies. Korea's world-class AI infrastructure and India's vast pool of AI talent make us natural partners. Together, we will actively identify projects that generate meaningful synergy.

At the same time, we will further expand cultural and people-to-people exchanges, the enduring foundation of our relationship. By bringing together India's rich cultural assets, exemplified by Bollywood, and Korea's globally influential K-Culture, we aim to create even greater synergy.

Since my first meeting with PM Narendra Modi in Canada in June last year, I have felt a genuine warmth and familiarity, as if reconnecting with an old friend. I believe in our shared commitment to people-centred politics, holding on to hope even in times of adversity. It's, therefore, especially meaningful and a great pleasure for me to visit India and meet PM Modi again. I am confident that this visit will mark an important milestone in further strengthening the friendship and trust between our two nations.

Like India, South Korea is heavily dependent on safe passage of ships through the Strait of Hormuz for its energy needs. How can both countries work together to aid efforts to keep the key energy route open and minimise the impact of the West Asia crisis on the global economy and energy security, as well as to de-risk supply chains globally?

■ Both the Republic of Korea and India depend on West Asia for a significant share of their energy supplies, including crude oil and natural gas. Accordingly, ensuring the security of critical maritime routes is essential to the safety of our peoples and the very survival of our nations.

Korea will maintain close communication with India to ensure that all vessels can navigate Hormuz safely and freely. We will also continue to work together in relevant international forums to uphold this shared commitment.

Another task that our two countries must undertake together is diversifying energy supply chains. Amid growing uncertainties in the global economy, I am confident that forward-looking and strategic cooperation between Korea and India can substantially further our shared national interests.

The strategic defence partnership has been strengthened by the co-production of K9 Vajra howitzers. How do you propose to take this partnership forward, especially in terms of technology-sharing that could boost India's 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' initiative?

■ The Republic of Korea fully supports India's 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' initiative. It is a plan of significant industrial and economic potential, and I am confident that it will certainly be realised thanks to PM Narendra Modi's steadfast commitment.

However, self-reliance is difficult to achieve entirely on one's own. Korea's rapid industrial development and economic growth were made possible through considerable support and assistance from partner countries.

In this regard, Korea seeks to serve as India's key partner in advancing the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' initiative. In particular, the K9 Vajra howitzer project stands as an exemplary case of our bilateral defence and defence industry cooperation.

The contract for the second phase of the K9 Vajra project, signed in April last year, provides for more than 60% of the manufacturing process to be carried out in India. It is currently being implemented smoothly, as planned.

Building on such examples of cooperation, Korea will continue to provide full support for India's independent production and operation of defence equipment.

Moreover, we will discuss various avenues of cooperation in joint technology development and coproduction as well as operations and maintenance so that both countries' defence industry ecosystems can advance together.

Both countries are exploring opportunities for cooperation in critical energy transition minerals — amid global efforts for resource diversification to avoid reliance on China — and also in areas like the maritime sector and shipbuilding, in which South Korea is a global leader. Is there any roadmap that you have in mind for a more result-orientated partnership in these areas?

■ With global supply chains undergoing reconfiguration, reducing excessive dependence on any single country has become a matter of survival, directly linked to the economic security of both nations. In particular, securing critical minerals, which are essential for cutting-edge industries, and stabilising the maritime logistics networks for those resources will be key factors in national competitiveness going forward.

India possesses critical minerals, while Korea has the capabilities to manufacture them into rechargeable batteries, electric vehicles and other advanced products. This makes our two countries ideal partners for generating synergy. By moving beyond the traditional model of importing raw material and combining Korea's technology with India's mining and refining industries, we can work together to establish stable critical-mineral supply chains.

There is also boundless potential for bilateral cooperation in the shipping and shipbuilding sectors.

For India to emerge as a global logistics and manufacturing hub, securing shipbuilding and maritime transport capabilities is essential.

With world-class expertise in shipbuilding and shipping, as well as extensive experience in overseas port projects, Korea is well positioned to become India's foremost partner. I understand that relevant MOUs are expected to be signed during the upcoming visit. I look forward to the day when vessels jointly built by our two countries sail across the world's oceans.

Now that there are question marks about the US commitment to the Indo-Pacific under President Donald Trump — and with Washington's focus shifting also to West Asia — how do you propose to work with like-minded countries to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific?

■ The world today faces complex and multi-layered crises. We are in a time of profound upheaval, as rising protectionism and the restructuring of global supply chains unsettle the foundation of the existing international order.

The war in West Asia has underscored the strategic reality that the Indian and Pacific Oceans form a single, interconnected maritime space — one whose stability no country can secure alone.

Despite its intense dynamism and vast potential, the Indo-Pacific has long remained more a beneficiary than a shaper of the international order, constrained by geopolitical tensions and the lack of institutional frameworks.

Today, however, regional countries, including Korea, have the capacity to lead in strengthening multilateralism and advancing a rules-based order. At this critical juncture, Korea will work closely with regional partners, playing a bridging role to foster deeper cooperation and help anchor a more resilient regional order.

As strategic coordination and unity across the Indo-Pacific have become ever more vital, my govt will continue to expand cooperation with regional partners, including India. In this spirit, we participated this year in the International Fleet Review and the multilateral exercise MILAN hosted by India. We intend to join the India-led Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative.

Peace and prosperity are essential to realising a free and open Indo-Pacific. To that end, we will deepen cooperation with key partners, including India, in strategic sectors such as shipbuilding, finance, AI, and the defence industry.

Both India and South Korea have been at the receiving end of the US tariff policy. While Seoul has signed a trade deal under which it will invest $350 billion in US industries, India's efforts for a bilateral trade agreement with Washington are still a work in progress. What's the advice you can offer to New Delhi on managing the trade relationship with the US? Also, how can India and South Korea help in keeping the global trade framework multilateral, rules-based and inclusive?

■ Korea and the US were able to reach a successful trade agreement last year because both sides pursued creative, pragmatic solutions grounded in mutual trust.

India possesses vast market potential as well as the geopolitical advantage of being a main pillar of the Indo-Pacific region. Accordingly, I believe that, rather than simply weighing the costs and benefits of opening the market, a more effective strategy would be highlighting India's pivotal role in global trade. There is no denying that, even as it faces significant challenges today, the multilateral trading system has long stood as a central pillar of the international order, driving shared growth over the past several decades.

Going forward, one of our most important tasks will be to safeguard the inclusivity of this system by establishing new rules that reflect the realities of a changing world.

In this respect, India and Korea can play especially significant roles. Korea stands as a prime example of a country that achieved remarkable economic growth under the multilateral trading system, while India – with its vast economic scale and dynamism — is well positioned to help shape the new rules. Together, our two countries can take multilateralism in a new direction.

DANCE *of* DEMOCRACY

In West Bengal, the real battle is between SIR & anti-incumbency

As Mamata Banerjee seeks a fourth straight term, SIR — which has deleted or put under adjudication one in 10 of the state's voters — has eclipsed incumbency, recasting Bengal's election as a struggle over identity and exclusion

PM Modi and Bengal BJP chief Samik Bhattacharya with a portrait of Vande Mataram composer Bankim Chandra Chatterjee at a poll rally. BJP has sought to counter the 'outsider' tag by underlining its commitment to Bengali culture

BY INVITATION

Shikha Mukerjee

As she seeks a fourth straight term, CM Mamata Banerjee will be especially counting on support from women, a group she has wooed with a slew of welfare schemes

Defending her bastion of West Bengal for the fourth time to extend her term by another five years to 20 years was never meant to be easy for Mamata Banerjee. She was up against a formidable challenger, the Bharatiya Janata Party, its redoubtable election-winning organisation and bottomless resources and its star campaigner, Narendra Modi.

For five years from 2021, Banerjee had been preparing for the fight to unseat her. Incidents that brought people spontaneously out into the streets like the rape and murder of a junior doctor working at the state-run R G Kar Medical College and Hospital, the rape of a student inside the college premises in Kasba, in south Kolkata, metres from the police station and a continuous flow of incidents of violence against women in rural areas had resulted in a spike in the prevailing discontent. She may have hit the streets to demand justice for the R G Kar victim, but that did not cut ice with voters nursing anti-incumbency sentiments.

In the regular course, Trinamool Congress should have been in the dock over its performance as a govt. Mamata Banerjee has been chief minister for 15 years. Anti-incumbency should have been the principal issue.

Things changed. Instead of being a challenger, BJP metamorphosed into an oppressor, after the country-wide crackdown on *ghuspaithiyas* — illegal Bengali-speaking immigrants, presumed to be infiltrators from Bangladesh. The arrests, even deportation of some to Bangladesh, where they were stranded and harassed, angered Bengalis, regardless of whether they were Banerjee loyalists, or veering to the BJP, because it was the only alternative against the dominance and abuse of power of the Trinamool Congress in everyday lived experiences.

The stunning declaration that Bengali was not a language, and Delhi Police's search for a translator of the "Bangladeshi language" was perceived as an assault on the cultural identity, pride and history of Bengalis. BJP, in Bengali perception, became the party involved in the assault, attacking the idea of Bengalihood: eating fish and meat on days that were considered significant to the codes of Sanatan Dharma.

The 2026 Bengal state assembly election was not meant to be a regular election. It was designed to be a once-and-for-all confrontation, an exercise in purification of the inflated numbers of ineligible voters, identifiable as Bengali-speaking — but mostly Muslim — infiltrators from Bangladesh, who had been given sanctuary by the Trinamool Congress after 2011, when it was first voted in. The Election Commission issued warnings, even as it kicked off the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls in Bihar in June 2025, that Bengal would be next.

What was deep-seated resentment among a very large and mixed section of voters over CM Banerjee's Muslim "appeasement" politics seems to have been buried by the SIR-adjudication-deletion process. Even her temple construction zeal — the Jagannath Dham in Digha in BJP leader of the opposition Suvendu Adhikari's backyard, or her laying the foundation for a Mahakaal temple in Siliguri, seems to have faded from the public sphere. SIR has become a personal issue for an overwhelming number of voters, those adversely impacted and others who are upset over the process of "othering" neighbours, friends, colleagues and acquaintances, because one in 10 people has been deleted or put under adjudication by the EC.

TMC should have been in the dock over its performance as a govt. But BJP metamorphosed into an oppressor. The arrests of perceived ghuspaithiyas angered Bengalis, whether they were Mamata loyalists or were veering to the BJP

Voters whose names were removed from the electoral rolls queue up to submit petitions for adjudication earlier this month in Bengal's Nadia. TMC is looking to channel widespread anger against SIR into a verdict against BJP

Instead, the political discourse acquired a new classification of voters labelled "under adjudication", and that has got so complicated that the Supreme Court took the extraordinary step of invoking Article 142 of the Constitution, which grants it the power to "pass such decree or make such order as is necessary for doing complete justice in any cause or matter pending before it", because 34.45 lakh people were being denied the fundamental right to exercise their choice through casting their vote in the Bengal election, following SIR. The EC's decision to freeze electoral rolls without carrying out hearings has been overturned — which Banerjee has promptly appropriated as 'her victory' on behalf of the people.

BJP's blind defence of the SIR exercise as a necessary intensive and customised process to verify the citizenship status of all voters, *ghuspaithiyas* and eligible citizens, left its core voters stranded in several districts, adding up to over 70 constituencies, including the Matuas, a Schedule Caste community that fled in large numbers after 1971. The purpose of SIR, as Union home minister Amit Shah declared in Parliament, was "Detect, delete, deport".

SIR seems to have overtaken anti-incumbency as the principal issue in this election. The reason is simple: the effect of SIR is that 91 lakh voters have been either deleted or put under adjudication, that is just under 12%; and the number of voters has declined to 6.44 crore from 7.08 crore. The election has turned into a confrontation between Trinamool Congress and the EC on the one hand, and Trinamool Congress and BJP on the other. As the only party that has consistently supported the SIR process and the EC's implementation, even after the Supreme Court invoked Article 142 for the purpose of "doing complete justice", in the perception of large numbers of voters, the EC and the BJP are interchangeable entities.

At a protest in Kolkata against the RG Kar rape-murder incident. Law and order situation would be one of the issues BJP would look to exploit to unseat the Mamata govt

Discontent that can be generalised as anti-incumbency exists. There is also widespread satisfaction, especially among women, because Banerjee is perceived as one who caters to their needs, through direct cash transfer programmes like the Lakshmir Bhandar and Swasthya Sathi cashless healthcare services. This loyalty is not transactional; it cannot be bought off by doubling the cash transfer as promised by BJP under the renamed Lakshmir Bhandar, the Matri Shakti Bharosa Scheme. The disproportionate deletions of 57 lakh women from the electoral roll cuts into Banerjee's most loyal vote bank, since over 50% of women have voted for her in preceding elections. It may trigger the swing away from her to BJP, as the alternative.

The difference between 2021 and now is that Trinamool is no longer haemorrhaging as it was then; the spate of defections to BJP in 2021 has ended. There has been a reverse flow from BJP to the Trinamool over the past five years, the most recent and significant being Adhikari's close aide Pabitra Kar, who is also a Trinamool candidate from Nandigram.

Instead of being a challenger offering a better alternative, BJP — with its double-engine model and its campaign on "zero tolerance for *ghuspaithiyas*" — has become the party that aims to serve Bengal by prioritising the rounding up of infiltrators from Bangladesh, the majority of whom are Muslims in its estimate, and deporting them. As the campaign has progressed, the home minister has made it clear that once the election is over, every ineligible voter, deleted by the tribunal set up on the orders of Supreme Court, will be deported.

When the context for a state election is about legacy issues carried over after momentous changes in India's neighbourhood and not a straightforward contest between competing political parties about better governance, politics becomes a competition in striking the most resonant sentimental chords. The question is, has BJP been able to frame Trinamool as the last and worst perpetrator of legitimising, on a large scale, illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, or has Trinamool nailed BJP for being "anti-Bengali"?

As the only party that has consistently supported the SIR process and the EC's implementation, even after SC invoked Article 142, in the perception of large numbers of voters, the EC and the BJP are interchangeable entities

The new variable in the electoral fight is the home-grown Indian Secular Front, which won one seat in 2021. The party is now contesting in over 30 seats and expects to shave off Muslim and Dalit votes, which it can do only at Trinamool's cost.

The principal rivals, Trinamool Congress and BJP, have positioned themselves as champions of Bengali nationhood. In BJP's version, the Bengali nation needs to be cleansed of Muslims from Bangladesh, who have been illegally granted sanctuary and pose a threat to the Hindu majority. In Trinamool's version, the idea of Bengal/India, shaped by generations of Bengali nationalist leaders, who contributed to the narrative and politics of the freedom struggle, needs to be defended against distortions and mutations that destroy its essence as secular, inclusive and custodian of that imagined space where "streams of humans" end up mingling in the ocean of great humanity.

The Trinamool Congress slogans in the 2026 election are assertions of how "Bangla" is the victim and how it shall triumph: "*Jataoi koro hamla, abar jitbe Bangla* (No matter how many attacks, Bengal will win)" is the war cry. By positioning herself as the champion of Bangla's identity, which includes its cultural pride in being plural and inclusive, Banerjee hopes to make sentiment work in her favour, burying the entirely valid discontent that has grown against her local leadership at the grassroots in urban and rural areas.

The writer is a senior Kolkata-based journalist

TIMES GLOBAL

THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU | MONDAY, APRIL 20, 2026

CHARLES DANCE MAY HAVE A NEW ROLE OF A FAMILY PATRIARCH TO PLAY AS HE IS IN TALKS TO JOIN DC STUDIOS' 'THE BATMAN PART II'

COINCIDENCE IS GOD'S WAY OF REMAINING ANONYMOUS
— ALBERT EINSTEIN

MATT BOMER SAYS HE RECORDED 2 UNRELEASED SONGS WRITTEN BY 17-TIME OSCAR-NOMINATED DIANE WARREN FOR A 2015 FILM

Iranians expect no respite after war ends

'Don't See Regime Being Toppled, Military Won't Put Down Their Guns, There's No Prospect For Better Future'

AFP

AP

Motorists ride past a billboard of slain supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei at the Valiasr Square in Tehran; women at the main gate of the Tehran University

Dubai: Iranians striving to maintain a semblance of normal life after weeks of US and Israeli bombing and a deadly crackdown on protesters in Jan remain daunted by the future as damage from airstrikes and internet cuts take a toll. With Iran and the US wrangling over a truce extension and an agreement to end the conflict, shops, restaurants and govt offices have stayed open.

On sunny mornings, city parks are busy with family picnics and young people playing sports while others gather at cafes. But behind such peaceful scenes, Iran's economy is in tatters and people are fearful of a new govt clampdown and angry about the destructive airstrikes. The difficulties that spurred mass unrest in Jan look likely to worsen.

"The war will end, but that's when our real problems with the system begin. I'm very afraid that if the regime reaches an agreement with the US, it will increase pressure on ordinary people," a 37-year-old named Fariba, who took part in the Jan unrest, told Reuters by phone from Iran. "People have not forgotten the regime's crimes in Jan, and the system has not forgotten that people do not want it. They are holding back now because they don't want to fight on a domestic front as well," she said. The bombing has killed thousands, according to official tolls, including many at a school on the first day of the conflict.

It has also destroyed infrastructure across the country, raising the prospect of mass job lay-offs. Iran's revolutionary theocracy looks as entrenched as ever after surviving weeks of bombardment and asserting control over global oil supplies.

"Iranians understood that this war is not going to topple the regime, but at the same time, it's going to make their lives much worse economically," said Omid Memarian, Iran analyst at independent US-based think tank Dawn. "The military is not going to put down their guns. They are going to stay and it's going to be bloody. It's going to be costly, with no prospect for a better future," he added.

In well-heeled north Tehran this week, Reuters interviewed young Iranians on camera about the war and their concerns. Foreign media in Iran operate under guidelines set by govt.

Mehtab, who works at a private company and asked not to use her family name, said things could be worse for Iranians given the impact of war and years of sanctions and isolation. "I do not want to say that it is normal, but as an Iranian with such a history, it is not very bad. We can live with it," she said. That view was not shared by Iranians Reuters reached by phone. They voiced far greater anxiety while speaking anonymously for fear of reprisals.

"Yes, people are enjoying the ceasefire for now — but what comes next? What are we supposed to do with a regime that has become even more powerful?" said Sara, 27, a private teacher who declined to give her family name or location.

Independent UK-based Iranian political analyst Hossein Rassam said it became clear in Jan that authorities would not back down again easily, and later that they would not crumble under military attack. The war had left Iranians even more polarised than before, but with few options. "This is a moment of reckoning for Iranians because, at the end of the day, Iranians, especially Iranians inside the country, realise that they need to live together. There is nowhere to go," he said.

'Fire under the ashes'

Many fear repression could now worsen. "On the streets, women are going around without the hijab, but it's unclear whether these kind of freedoms will continue after a deal with the US. Pressure will 100% increase, because once there is peace with Washington, the regime will no longer face the same external pressure," Arjang, a 43-year-old father of two, told Reuters by phone from Tehran. The Jan protests brought no tangible change to people's lives, while leading the authorities to severely restrict internet use - a blow to both businesses and ordinary people desperate for information during war.

Popular frustration may start to mount after the war comes to an end and people are less afraid of being labelled as traitors, said Memarian. "There is a lot of fire under the ashes," he said. REUTERS

8 children between ages of 1 and 14 dead after shooting in US

AP

Iowa City police officers at the crime scene near the University of Iowa campus on Sunday

Shreveport: A gunman in Louisiana killed eight children in domestic-related shootings at different homes early Sunday, police in Shreveport said.

The victims ranged in age from one to about 14 years old, said Shreveport police spokesperson Chris Bordelon. A total of 10 people were shot.

The gunman later died after a chase with officers who fired at the suspect, Bordelon said. The suspect stole a car while leaving the scene of the shootings and was followed by police, according to Bordelon.

Officials said they were still gathering details at the crime scenes, which extended across three locations. Some of the children shot were related to the suspect, Bordelon said. "This is an extensive scene unlike anything most of us have ever seen," he said. At a news conference outside the residence where one of the shootings occurred, officials appeared stunned, requesting patience and prayers from the community as they sorted through multiple crime scenes.

Not including Shreveport incident, the Gun Violence Archive lists at least 119 mass shootings in the US this year, resulting in 117 deaths, including 79 children, and 458 people injured. The archive defines a mass shooting as an incident in which at least four people, not including the shooter, are injured or killed by gunfire. AGENCIES

3 students and 2 others shot at near Univ of Iowa

Iowa City: A shooting during a fight in a nightlife district near the University of Iowa campus wounded five people early on Sunday, including three students, police and university officials said.

Multiple victims were transported to hospitals for gunshot wounds, according to Iowa City police. One person was in critical condition while four others were stable, police said. No arrests had been made as of Sunday morning, according to a campus alert. Police released photos of groups of people that were identified as persons of interest.

Officers were responding to reports of a large fight in downtown Iowa City close to a pedestrian mall filled with bars and restaurants when they heard shots being fired, police said. AP

Iran prez: US announces who they will kill next, then call us terrorists

▶Continued from P1

Reuters

A woman collects books from the rubble of her house in Zrarieh, Lebanon, on Sunday

Earlier, the US president set a belligerent, aggressive tone ahead of parleys with yet another tough message to Iran on social media, berating it for firing on merchant ships in the Strait of Hormuz in violation of the ceasefire agreement as he once again unloaded on Teheran.

"We're offering a very fair and reasonable DEAL, and I hope they take it because, if they don't, the United States is going to knock out every single Power Plant, and every single Bridge, in Iran. NO MORE MR. NICE GUY!" Trump warned in a post, a toned-down version of his threat two weeks ago to end Iranian civilisation, but one many analysts still see as potential war crime.

"They'll come down fast, they'll come down easy and, if they don't take the DEAL, it will be my Honor to do what has to be done, which should have been done to Iran, by other Presidents, for the last 47 years. IT'S TIME FOR THE IRAN KILLING MACHINE TO END!" Trump added.

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian meanwhile said it is the US which announces who they will assassinate next and then call Iranians terrorists. "Human rights is silent. The UN is asleep. And the international laws they love to cite exist for everyone except the people being bombed," he countered in one interview.

Trump is also being pilloried at home for a ham-handed approach to negotiations without adequate preparatory work, with even US analysts saying his effort to simply bulldoze Iran with threats and invective is not working. But according to an account in the Wall Street Journal citing senior administration officials, Trump has told aides he wants to appear as unstable and insulting as possible, believing it could bring Iranians to the table.

"It was a language the Iranians would understand. But he was also concerned about the fallout. 'How's it playing?' he asked advisers," the report quoted one official as saying, referring to Trump's posts on Easter in which he called Iranian leaders "crazy b******s", asked them to "open the f-king strait" and threatened to end their civilisation, an approach commentators across the word saw as "unhinged".

But far from being spooked, Tehran has stared down the US at the risk of being pulverised some more, even as Trump has repeatedly suggested the Iranian leadership is divided.

At home though Trump is facing growing criticism for leading the US into yet another distant quagmire. Supporters of vice-president J D Vance are also unhappy that he is being thrown under the bus for talks to defuse a war that he was against from the very beginning.

Some commentators are surprised that Trump has detailed the vice-president for talks halfway across the world while kneecapping him with threats against Iran that diminish prospects of success. "Sending Vance back to Pakistan after 21 hours of failed talks is like restarting a microwave that already caught fire," one observer noted tartly on X.

Israel publishes map of southern Lebanon territory under its control

Jerusalem: The Israeli military published for the first time a map of its new deployment line inside Lebanon on Sunday, bringing dozens of mostly abandoned Lebanese villages under its control, days after a ceasefire with Hezbollah took effect.

There was no immediate comment from Lebanese officials or from Iran-backed Hezbollah. Israel and Lebanon agreed on Thursday to a US-backed ceasefire in fighting between Israel and Hezbollah.

Stretching east to west, the deployment line on the map runs 5-10 km deep from the border into Lebanese territory, where Israel has said that it plans to create a so-called buffer zone. Israeli forces have destroyed Lebanese villages in the area, saying their aim is to protect northern Israeli towns from Hezbollah.

"Five divisions, alongside Israeli navy forces, are simultaneously operating south of the forward defence line in southern Lebanon to dismantle Hezbollah terror infrastructure sites and to prevent direct threats to communities in northern Israel," the military said in a statement accompanying the map. REUTERS

IEA chief pitches for Iraq-Turkiye pipeline to bypass Hormuz: Report

Fatih Birol

International Energy Agency executive director Fatih Birol proposed building a new oil pipeline linking Iraq's Basra oil fields and Turkiye's Mediterranean oil terminal in Ceyhan to shift the balance away from the Strait of Hormuz, according to Turkish newspaper Hurriyet. "I believe a Basra–Ceyhan pipeline could be extremely attractive and a very important project for both Iraq and Turkiye, as well as for regional supply security — especially from Europe's perspective," Birol said in an interview with Hurriyet, published on Sunday. "I also believe the financing issue can be overcome. Now is the right time."

Iraq relies on Hormuz to export oil from the Gulf port of Basra, which holds one of the world's largest reserves at around 90 billion barrels and accounts for about 90% of the country's oil exports, Birol told the newspaper. "The vase has been broken once, and it's very difficult to fix," Birol said, referring to Hormuz. A new oil pipeline "is a necessity for Iraq and an opportunity for Turkiye. It is also a major opportunity for Europe in terms of supply security. I think this should be considered a strategic project." For such a project, Turkiye and Iraq need to reach a political agreement, "which I believe is achievable," he said, adding that securing financing for the project could also receive support from Europe.

Turkiye has already proposed extending a Turkish-Iraqi pipeline between Ceyhan and the Kirkuk oil fields in the north to the south as part of efforts to build a multi-billion dollar trade route that would stretch from the Faw Port in Iraq's southern province of Basra to Turkiye in the north. Separately, Turkiye, Syria and Jordan recently agreed to modernise their railway and highway systems with the aim of eventually creating a contiguous corridor between southern Europe and the Persian Gulf. Turkiye has emerged as a viable option after Israel–Hamas war stalled progress on the India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor to build rail links across the Arabian Peninsula. BLOOMBERG

Amid calls to quit, UK PM gets ministers' backing

UK cabinet ministers emerged to back **Keir Starmer** as calls for the prime minister to resign over the Peter Mandelson affair grow. Speaking on behalf of govt on Sunday, technology secretary Liz Kendall told Sky News she supports Starmer "100%" even after fresh revelations last week that security officials had raised concerns about Mandelson's appointment as ambassador to the US.

Both Kendall and deputy prime minister David Lammy, who spoke to the Guardian newspaper, insisted that their boss would have blocked the appointment had he known Mandelson had failed security vetting.

The comments by Kendall and Lammy over the weekend follow days of silence from key cabinet ministers, as the revelations prompted calls from the opposition for Starmer to resign. Starmer, who has blamed the foreign office's top civil servant, Olly Robbins, for approving the appointment without informing Downing Street of the failed vetting, is due to discuss the matter in Parliament on Monday.

Kendall said it was wrong for Robbins not to inform the prime minister or the foreign secretary that vetting had advised against the appointment. Starmer is "a man of integrity," Kendall said. "He is a man on the big decisions facing the country who makes the right calls." Echoing those remarks, Lammy said that it was "inexplicable" Robbins failed to inform Starmer of the facts. Allies of Robbins have told British media that the former civil servant was being scapegoated. BLOOMBERG

Baby food tests positive for rat poison in Austria

Vienna: Baby food brand HiPP is recalling some of its baby food jars after a sample tested positive for rat poison in Austria, officials said. Authorities believe the tampering occurred in 190-gram jars of baby food made with carrots and potatoes for 5-month-olds sold from SPAR supermarkets in Austria. The sample tested positive for the poison on Saturday.

HiPP, in a statement, said it is recalling all of its baby food jars sold at SPAR supermarkets — which include SPAR, EUROSPAR, INTERSPAR and Maximarkt stores — in Austria as a precaution. Customers can get full refunds even without a receipt. The tampered jars have a spoilt odour, police said. HiPP said it cannot rule out that the poison was added through external contamination. AP

Humanoid robot sprints to victory in China, beating human half-marathon world record

Getty Images

The winner from Honor, a Chinese smartphone maker, completed the 21-km race in 50 minutes and 26 seconds. That was faster than the human world record holder, Uganda's Jacob Kiplimo, who finished the same distance in about 57 minutes in March at the Lisbon road race

Beijing: A humanoid robot that won a half-marathon race for robots in Beijing on Sunday ran faster than the human world record in a show of China's technological leaps. The winner from Honor, a Chinese smartphone maker, completed the 21-kilometre race in 50 minutes and 26 seconds, according to a WeChat post by the Beijing Economic-Technological Development Area, also known as Beijing E-Town, where the race kicked off.

That was faster than the human world record holder, Uganda's Jacob Kiplimo, who finished the same distance in about 57 minutes in March at the Lisbon road race. The robot's performance marked a significant step forward from last year's inaugural race, during which the winning robot finished in 2 hours, 40 minutes and 42 seconds.

But the competition, which was held alongside a race for humans, was not without hiccups — one robot fell flat at the start line, another bumped into a barrier.

Du Xiaodi, Honor's test development engineer, said his team was happy with the results. Du said its robot design was modelled on outstanding human athletes, with long legs of about 95 cm (around 37 inches), and was equipped with what he called a powerful liquid-cooling system. "Looking ahead, some of these technologies might be transferred to other areas. For example, structural reliability and liquid-cooling technology could be applied in future industrial scenarios," he said.

State broadcaster CCTV reported that the runners-up, which were also from Honor and used autonomous navigation, finished the race in about 51 minutes and 53 minutes respectively. A robot served as a traffic officer to direct the participants with its arm gestures and voice, CCTV added. AP

Bulgarians vote to elect a parl for the 8th time in 5 years

Sofia: Bulgarian ex-president Rumen Radev's formation has come first in the eighth parliamentary elections in five years on Sunday, according to exit polls, but without securing a majority. Radev, who resigned as president in Jan, ran on a pledge to fight corruption after an anti-graft movement triggered a long political crisis.

The European Union's poorest member has seen successive govts since 2021, when anti-graft rallies ended the conservative administration of long-time leader Boyko Borissov. Radev, who has called for renewing ties with Russia and opposes military aid to Ukraine, was president for nine years in the Balkan nation before stepping down to lead the new centre-left Progressive Bulgaria group of parties. AFP

DAILY PLANET

AP

US ex-President Obama met with NYC mayor Zohran Mamdani for the first time on Saturday at a child care centre where they read to preschoolers and led a singalong. The duo did not take any questions

Days after ordering burgers at Oval Office, Trump dubs move as 'tacky'

US President Donald Trump celebrated the first anniversary of "no tax on tips" policy with a doorstep delivery of burgers at the Oval Office — a staged campaign he dismissed days later as "tacky" and "embarrassing". The White House ordered McDonald's cheeseburgers that were brought to the Oval Office by DoorDash delivery driver Sharon Simmons, a Republican supporter from Arkansas, and received personally by Trump. "We do these things in politics; they're a little embarrassing. They're a little tiny embarrassing, but we do them and you win by landslides," Trump said at a rally to celebrate the "no tax on tips" policy in Las Vegas on Thursday. Simmons had delivered two bags full of burgers and fries at the Oval Office on Monday with the White House highlighting that she had saved $11,000 in taxes due to the "no tax on tips" policy. "Sharon delivered to the Oval Office — to be honest, it was a little tacky," Trump said.

Now, Blue Origin launches rocket with used booster

Blue Origin, the US space company of Amazon founder Jeff Bezos, on Sunday successfully reused and recovered a booster for its New Glenn rocket, confirming its mastery of a technical feat that could boost its launch cadence and expand its rivalry with SpaceX. But the uncrewed mission also suffered a partial setback: the satellite carried into space by the rocket did not settle into the right orbit. The company has launched the New Glenn twice before, but only with new rocket boosters. The novel recycling approach comes amid fierce competition between Bezos's firm and fellow tech titan Elon Musk's SpaceX, which has also recovered a booster from a launched rocket.

'Wanted the last sound in this place to be of music...not explosions and missiles'

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Afarideh and his wife at the destroyed school

In the shattered remains of his 15-year-old music school, Iranian musician Hamidreza Afarideh sat on a debris-laden floor, drew his bow and played with a kamancheh, what he called "the last sound" of a life's work reduced to dust.

Weeks after a strike destroyed Honiak Music Academy, Afarideh walked back into the hazardous ruins on April 7, 2026, and recorded a haunting video that quickly travelled far beyond Tehran, capturing his moments of deep grief after an airstrike on March 23 left the academy severely damaged.

"Today was the last day to say goodbye to my school. I wanted the last sound that remains in this place to be the sound of music...not explosions and missiles," Afarideh wrote the same day, in a now viral post. Within days, his images and clips had racked up millions of views across Instagram, X , YouTube and TikTok, prompting a flood of multilingual reactions online, with many seeing it as a reminder of the human cost beyond military headlines, triggering calls to "stop war."

Speaking to **TOI**, Afarideh recalled the day of the attack. "I felt that a very important part of our memories, and sounds that could have continued in that space—sounds that many artists could hear, see, and live with for years—were suddenly destroyed by a missile and a drone." The music academy, built over a decade and a half by Afarideh and his wife, Sheida Ebadatdoust, was what he calls "their shared life project."

"We worked with very limited resources, relying only on our dreams and dedication to build this academy. Losing it suddenly is extremely hard. All our hard work, efforts, actions to bring people closer to music and instruments was lost in a single night. It is very difficult to accept. Everything we built over so many years... This loss will take years to process."

Despite the risk of collapse, he returned to the damaged building. "I knew it was very dangerous... but I felt that if I didn't record this sound, it would stay in my heart forever. I might not stay (alive) afterwards... I felt I had to go there and make this the last image and the last sound remaining from the space we had created."

For Afarideh, the viral moment has brought global attention—but also underscored, he says, "the reality of war and destruction" faced by his 250 students and 22 teachers. His video has become a global plea for recognition of the cost of war not just in bodies and infrastructure, but in art, memory, and the fragile ecosystems of creativity that take decades to build and minutes to erase.

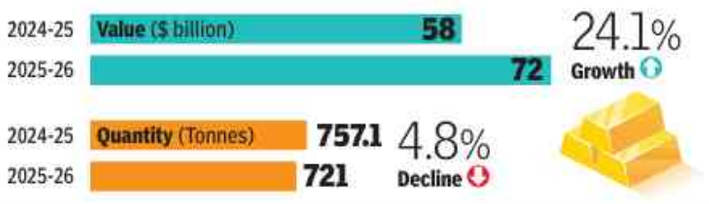
He calls the place a "second home" where students came not just to learn music but to feel seen and held. "Students, who were to return someday, are now scattered, shell-shocked, and struggling to process what happened. One child crossed the building with his mother and didn't speak for hours afterwards. All students are going through similar feelings."

Yet, Afarideh insists on the power of art. "Music... is a symbol of freedom," he said. "In times of war, it can heal—even if only a little—the pain of those who have lost everything."

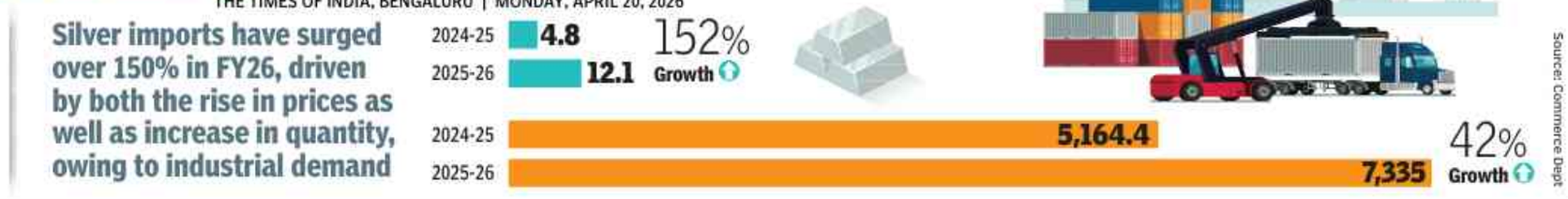
TIMES BUSINESS

THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU | MONDAY, APRIL 20, 2026

Gold imports have increased over 24%, driven by the rise in prices, even as the quantity has declined in FY26



Silver imports have surged over 150% in FY26, driven by both the rise in prices as well as increase in quantity, owing to industrial demand



Tata Trusts to alter clauses which bar non-Zoroastrians

From Serving On Bai Hirabai Trust | Move Follows Mistry's Petition

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THE STORY SO FAR

- **Bai Hirabai Trust (BHT)** files a board composition change with the Maharashtra Charity Commissioner (MCC) after Mehli Mistry's term is not renewed
- **Mistry objects, citing the 1923 deed** requiring all trustees to be **practising Zoroastrians**
- **Venu Srinivasan resigns** following Tata Trusts' request; **Vijay Singh does not**
- **Tata Trusts reinforces Mistry's objections,** says non-Zoroastrian appointments could be challenged under the deed
- **BHT holds a board meeting on Friday;** Singh is absent
- **BHT decides to approach the MCC** to remove the century-old eligibility clause which it feels is restrictive

Mumbai: Tata Trusts is moving the charity commissioner to dismantle a century-old provision barring non-Zoroastrians from serving as trustees of the Bai Hirabai Jamsetji Tata Navsari Charitable Institution.

The decision was taken at the board meeting held last Friday. Tata Trusts said the trustees decided to seek alteration of restrictive clauses governing trustee eligibility "to correct anomalies in the Bai Hirabai trust deed and to align it with the values that the Tata Trusts have always epitomised."

The move follows a challenge by Mehli Mistry, a former trustee, who petitioned the commissioner arguing that the 1923 trust deed required all trustees to be practising Zoroastrians with permanent residence in Mumbai or Navsari, conditions he contended at least two sitting trustees did not meet.

Bai Hirabai's decision to alter the deed is an "admission" that the restrictions did not allow non-Zoroastrians, said a lawyer. "This confirms that the prior composition was illegal, and therefore all decisions taken during that period are illegal." He added there was no question of a limitation period, and whether the current trustees even have the power to seek an amendment was itself a moot point. The dispute has already claimed one casualty. Venu Srinivasan, chairman emeritus of TVS Motors, resigned from the Bai Hirabai board following Mistry's challenge, later acknowledging he had done so at the request of Tata Trusts management. Vijay Singh, a former defence secretary, declined a similar request and did not attend Friday's meeting.

Both men alleged that Tata Trusts had withheld from them a legal opinion by ex-CJI MH Kania, who held that the restrictive eligibility clauses were "bad in law." Kania's reasoning rested on a codicil to Sir Ratan Tata's will, which lays down that there are no restrictions on trustee eligibility on grounds of ethnicity, race or religion. It also provided that trustees of the Sir Ratan Tata Trust (SRTT) would also serve as trustees of Bai Hirabai. Srinivasan and Singh remain on the SRTT board, which holds shares in Tata Sons. Bai Hirabai Trust does not own shares in any Tata company. It was endowed by Sir Ratan Tata, younger son of group founder Jamsetji, who bequeathed properties in Mumbai and Navsari to the institution.

"The Trusts are doing damage control," said a person familiar with the matter, noting that the group had previously maintained that irrespective of the Kania opinion and past precedent, appointments of non-Zoroastrians remained open to challenge under the deed's provisions.

Lawyer Katyayani Agrawal alleges violations

In a separate development, lawyer Katyayani Agrawal has lodged a complaint alleging violations of the Maharashtra Public Trusts Act by SRTT. Agrawal's complaint invokes section 30A(2) of the Act, which stipulates that perpetual trustees shall not exceed one-fourth of the total trustees. Of the six trustees currently on SRTT's board, three—chairman Noel Tata, his older half-brother Jimmy Tata and Jehangir HC Jehangir — hold perpetual positions, amounting to 50% of the board, double the statutory ceiling of 25%.

Agrawal, who has obtained a supporting opinion from ex-SC justice Krishna Murari, has urged the commissioner to take consequential action, including the removal of excess perpetual trustees or the appointment of additional trustees to restore the board to legal compliance. However, a lawyer said the complaint was unlikely to succeed, as the perpetual trustees had been appointed prior to the amendment of the Act.

Bank credit growth to slow down in FY27, deposits a worry for lenders

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FUNDING GAP LOOMS FOR BANKS

- According to a survey by **Indian Banks Association and Ficci,** nearly 71% of respondents **expect growth in the 9% to 13% range**
- **According to an SBI report, credit growth is projected at 13-14% in FY27,** while aggregate deposits are estimated to grow at 11% to 12%, creating a funding gap
- **Bank of Baroda is looking at growth in deposits of 10-12%** and that in credit of 12-14% based on assumption of GDP growth of about 7% in real terms
- Part of the **slowdown reflects the higher base of FY26,** which was influenced by a change in data reporting by RBI

Mumbai: Multiple reports show that bankers are bracing for slower credit offtake in FY27 after a high base in FY26, with deposit mobilisation emerging as a constraint on margins.

According to a survey by the Indian Banks Association and Ficci, lenders enter FY27 with a constructive but more calibrated outlook, with nearly 71% of respondents expecting growth in the 9% to 13% range.

Credit demand is expected to be led by retail, services and SME segments, while industrial lending is seen recovering gradually alongside an infrastructure and capex-led cycle.

Bank deposits rose to Rs 262.3 lakh crore in FY26, up about Rs 31.2 lakh crore with growth accelerating to 13.5% from 10.1% a year ago.

Bank credit increased to Rs 213.6 lakh crore, rising by Rs 29.6 lakh crore with growth at 16.1% compared with 11% in FY25, pushing the credit-deposit ratio to 81.4% from 79.6%.

According to an SBI report on the outlook for FY27, credit growth is projected at 13-14% in FY27, while aggregate deposits are estimated to grow at 11% to 12%, creating a funding gap. This gap is expected to be partly bridged by relaxed liquidity coverage ratio norms that could free up Rs 2.7-3 lakh crore of lendable resources. "Declining Current Account and Savings Account (CASA) ratios are a major concern for banks, as they signal a shift from low-cost, stable deposits to more expensive funding sources, compressing net interest margins (NIMs)," the SBI report said.

"For FY27 we are looking at growth in deposits of 10-12% and that in credit of 12-14% based on assumption of GDP growth of 7% in real terms. The high base growth rate in FY26 will have bearing on that for FY27," said Madan Sabnavis, chief economist, Bank of Baroda, in a report.

Part of the slowdown reflects the higher base of FY26, which was influenced by a change in data reporting by Reserve Bank of India from the last Friday of the reporting fortnight to March 31.

"There will be a reversal (in bank deposits) in the first fortnight of April just as was witnessed in Jan after there was a sharp increase of about Rs 7.3 lakh crore in deposits in the last fortnight of Dec. This was followed by a decline of Rs 3.6 lakh crore in the first fortnight of Jan," Sabnavis added.

OpenAI science, Sora heads exit

OpenAI's head of science initiatives and the leader of its Sora AI video team are leaving the company, extending a series of senior exits as it reorganises its product portfolio.

Kevin Weil, former chief product officer who later led the OpenAI for Science initiative, said on Friday that he is stepping down. Weil joined OpenAI nearly two years ago and earlier led product development at Instagram and Twitter. Bill Peebles, who headed Sora, also said on Friday that he is leaving, weeks after OpenAI announced plans to discontinue support for the AI video generator.

In recent weeks, OpenAI has moved to streamline its product offerings as it seeks to strengthen its position among enterprise customers and prepare for a potential initial public offering. Alongside winding down Sora, the company is developing a desktop application integrating its ChatGPT chatbot, coding tool and web browser. In a post on X, Weil said his team was "being decentralised into other research teams".

An OpenAI spokesperson said the changes are part of efforts to refocus and unify product lines. Prism, a tool for scientists previously led by Weil as vice-president of science, will be integrated into the Codex team. BLOOMBERG

TOI IN THE CLASSROOM

Rethinking Returns While Investing In A Volatile Market

A volatile mix of West Asia tensions, rising crude prices, weakening rupee and uncertainty on AI-led disruption underscores investors' need to reset return expectations. With easy gains of the post-Covid rally behind us, diversification is the key to navigating markets ahead

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Why Reset Return Expectations?

For much of the past few years, equities have done the heavy lifting in investor portfolios, delivering strong returns after the post-Covid correction. That phase is now showing signs of fatigue. With valuations still not cheap, earnings growth uncertain and global risks rising, it may no longer be realistic to expect equities alone to drive portfolio returns.

In this environment, investors need to rely on a broader mix of assets. Indian equities, international equities, debt, REITs, InvITs and gold can each play a role in generating returns and managing risk. A diversified portfolio is better positioned to absorb shocks and deliver more stable returns across market cycles.

How Can Investors Achieve This?

The approach should be aligned with an investor's risk appetite and ability to handle volatility. For relatively conservative investors, a balanced portfolio could involve allocating 40% to equities, 10% to international equities, 35% to fixed income and 15% to precious metals.

This mix aims to balance growth with stability while cushioning downside risks. Investors can either build this allocation through individual funds or opt for a multi-asset fund that manages such diversification within a single product.

More aggressive investors with a higher tolerance for sharp swings may choose to increase equity exposure, particularly to mid and smallcap segments or international markets, to enhance return potential. However, this comes with higher drawdown risk and requires a longer investment horizon.

What Should Investors' Return Expectations Be?

The widely held expectation of 12–15% equity returns may not hold in the near term. While such returns are possible over a cycle, investors need to be mindful of the risks from slowing earnings growth, elevated valuations and global uncertainties.

Even 8–10% returns could be considered reasonable in the current environment, especially if portfolios are structured with an emphasis on capital protection and stability. The idea is not to limit ambition but to align expectations with the realities of a more volatile market cycle.

— PRASHANT MAHESH

Light is right this Akshaya Tritiya

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Mumbai: Light-weight jewellery was the flavour this Akshaya Tritiya, as a steep rise in gold prices nudged consumers to strike a balance between their budgets and love for the yellow metal that's considered auspicious in Indian culture.

For context—gold has risen nearly 57% year-on-year since last year's festival—from around Rs 97,000 per 10 grams to roughly Rs 1,52,000 today while silver has surged 163% from about Rs 97,000 per kilogram to Rs 2,55,000, said Samit Guha, MD & CEO at MMTC-PAMP.

At Joyalukkas stores, footfall was steady with consumers shopping for lightweight and daily wear gold jewellery, besides making some bridal purchases, said chairman & MD Joy Alukkas. "Intent-led demand for bridal jewellery is well balanced by traditional shagun purchases such as gold coins and lightweight designs," said Ramesh Kalyanaraman, executive director at Kalyan Jewellers. For the brand, markets in the North, West and parts of South India have seen strong demand.

GLITTERING METAL: A steep rise in gold prices nudged consumers to strike a balance between their budgets and love for the yellow metal this year

Jewellery brands sweetened the deal for consumers to ease their burden on the pockets and ensure enough demand on a day when business tends to be brisk. Malabar Gold & Diamonds, for instance, is offering up to 30% off on making charges of gold along with a similar deal on diamond value while Joyalukkas is allowing customers the option to lock in Sunday's gold prices.

Some brands have also tapped into quick commerce platforms to reach more consumers as instant purchases increasingly find traction with all tribes of shoppers. "Our strategic integration with Swiggy Instamart has been pivotal in ensuring high accessibility for convenience-led and last-minute purchases," said Kalyanaraman.

Consumers are making more deliberate choices—opting for lightweight jewellery, and increasingly moving towards 24 karat gold and 999.9+ purity silver coins and bars, said Guha, describing the shift as rational, not reluctant.

As far as investment related demand is concerned, digital gold, gold ETFs and silver ETFs are seeing sustained inflows as both retail and institutional investors recognise precious metals as a meaningful component of a diversified portfolio, said Guha.

The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) estimates this Akshaya Tritiya to generate business worth over Rs 20,000 crore in gold and silver, higher than last year's Rs 16,000 crore.

"Rather than dampening demand, elevated prices are reshaping buying patterns—pushing consumers towards more calculated and value-driven purchases," said Praveen Khandelwal, secretary general at CAIT.

Dalal Street bulls bet on West Asia peace talks

Mumbai: With hopes for a West Asia peace plan moving ahead, although with a fair share of hiccups, investor-sentiment on Dalal Street remains positive. As a result, sensex is expected to continue its winning run this week. Market players feel the progress of the second round of talks in Islamabad could boost the market sentiment further and take the indices higher.

According to Vinod Nair of Geojit Investments, the near-term direction for the Indian market hinges on West Asia peace progress, stability of crude prices below $100/barrel mark, and foreign fund flow trajectory. TNN

Robotics still awaits the 'GPT moment': Y Combinator's Xu

'Founder Insight, Technical Depth Key To Emerging AI Opportunities'

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Bengaluru: Robotics has yet to reach its "GPT moment," though the ecosystem is taking shape as startups build the underlying tools to train and deploy autonomous systems, according to Y Combinator general partner Jon Xu.

"Fundamental autonomous systems that can truly make decisions and act — we have not seen that moment come yet. It is still up for grabs," Xu told TOI on the sidelines of Y Combinator's first Startup School event in India on Saturday. Startup School is the accelerator's founder programme aimed at helping early-stage builders launch companies, with sessions on product, growth and fundraising, along with access to tools, credits and a global founder community. Xu said early momentum is emerging in the infrastructure layer. He pointed to a growing set of startups developing tools that enable robotics companies to train systems and unlock autonomous value.

Y Combinator, one of the world's most influential startup accelerators, has backed companies such as Airbnb, Stripe and Dropbox. "These are still early-stage companies, and many of their customers today are other startups. But that is similar to how AWS started, where the first set of customers were startups that later became large companies," he said.

The remarks come at a time when global attention in artificial intelligence has largely centred on software and large language models, even as hardware-led innovation remains uneven across regions. Xu noted that China has made significant progress in deploying robotics, aided by its manufacturing depth, but said core breakthroughs in autonomy remain unresolved.

In India, Xu sees early signs of technical depth emerging beyond software, particularly in hardware and frontier technologies, though much of it remains under the radar. "I've had conversations with founders building drone devices, and others working on hardware to detect drone threats," he said. "Young, curious founders are building in these spaces."

While categories such as drones may appear crowded, Xu argued that strong technical teams can still differentiate themselves. "In any space perceived to be crowded, people with the right insights and deep technical understanding can stand out," he said. Beyond robotics, Xu highlighted model training, reinforcement learning, and efforts to narrow the gap between open-source and proprietary AI models as key focus areas. He also pointed to scientific problem-solving as a potential frontier for AI systems.

On founder selection, Xu said Y Combinator continues to prioritise individuals over ideas, while cautioning against treating the accelerator as a validation milestone. "I would not look at YC as a signal for whether you should work on something," he said. Instead, the firm looks for deep user insight and clear thinking. "The intentionality with which you design for a specific customer—those insights don't lie," Xu said. The event saw over 2,000 early-stage builders and students participate, selected from around 25,000 applicants. Those selected also received $25,000 in AI and cloud credits.

> In any space perceived to be crowded, people with the right insights and deep technical understanding can stand out...I would not look at YC as a signal for whether you should work on something....The intentionality with which you design for a specific customer — those insights don't lie
>
> **Jon Xu** | GENERAL PARTNER, Y COMBINATOR

Zepto eyes 'India's Amazon' play

Bengaluru: Zepto founder and chief executive officer **Aadit Palicha** said the company is positioning itself as an organising layer for India's grocery supply chain. "The big vision is that over the next four to five years, we will become a large grocer in the country, operating in about a quarter of India's cities. If we achieve that, we can build a homegrown version of Amazon or any other e-commerce platform we choose," he said during a panel with YC general partner Jared Friedman. If executed, the strategy could enable Zepto to expand beyond groceries, launch its own consumer brands, and compete with larger horizontal e-commerce platforms. TNN

IT rules reboot: 'Code of Ethics' scope may expand

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PROPOSED CHANGES

- Platforms such as Meta, Google will need to comply with written directives issued by MeitY
- Clarity on who falls under the digital media ethics framework
- New pathway may allow govt to refer cases directly to Inter-Departmental Committee

In an advisory shared by the ministry of electronics and information technology (MeITY) on March 30, govt has proposed three key amendments to the IT Rules. This is the second amendment proposal to the IT Rules in 2026.

What is MeitY proposing?

The changes cover how platforms must deal with govt directives, who falls under the digital media ethics framework, and how the committee that handles content complaints can now be activated.

What changes for Meta, Google and others regarding the proposed new rules?

Under the proposed amendment, platforms will need to comply with written directives issued by MeitY. This could include advisories, orders, SOPs or codes of practice. Each directive must be in writing, cite the legal provision it is based on, and specify which platforms it applies to. It also cannot go against existing laws.

How is this likely to impact big tech companies?

Compliance with these directives would become part of a platform's due diligence obligations under Section 79 of the IT Act — the clause that provides safe harbour protection. This protection ensures platforms are not held liable for user-generated content. If a platform fails to meet these obligations, it risks losing that protection. Companies are likely to be concerned because their legal liabilities could expand considerably.

TOI Explains

What about regular users posting news on social media?

The scope of the Code of Ethics is also set to expand.

So far, it has applied mainly to registered digital news publishers. The amendment would bring in individual users who post news or current affairs content on social media under the same framework. In effect, someone sharing or commenting on news online could fall within the same oversight structure as a formal publisher.

What is changing about the complaints committee?

The Inter-Departmental Committee currently steps in when complaints are escalated through the grievance process. The proposal—under Rule 14—introduces a new pathway that could allow govt to refer cases directly to the committee, even if no complaint has been filed or escalated.

What questions are still open?

The amendment does not specify timelines for compliance, what situations might trigger a directive, or what process platforms can follow if they need clarification. These are areas that will likely become clearer as the rules move closer to being finalised.

SNAP SHOTS

PRABHU CLAIMS GOLD

India's Selva Prabhu continued his impressive run in the 2026 athletics season by securing the men's triple jump title at the Oregon Team Invitational 2026 athletics meet. He produced a winning jump of 16.61m to finish at the top of the standings. Apalos Edwards finished second with a best effort of 16.53m, while Jhavor Bennett claimed third place after recording 16.11m.

Bagan go top of the table: Mohun Bagan Super Giant controlled most of the game on the pitch against NorthEast United FC but were almost outplayed by rain that led to almost 30 minutes suspension of play after the change of ends and the fear of it being cancelled and a point shared between the rivals, **reports Sudeshna Ghosh.** However, in the end, Bagan rode the early strike from Brazilian Robson to the top of the ISL table with a 1-0 win at Indira Gandhi Athletic Stadium in Guwahati on Sunday.

Aditi fights back: India's Aditi Ashok fought back with three birdies on the back nine to move up to tied 36th place with a third-round card of 3-under 69 at the JM Eagle Los Angeles Championship. Aditi birdied the sixth but gave it back on the Par-5 seventh. On the back nine, she birdied the 11th and added two more gains on the 16th and the 18th for a 69, after 70-72 on the first two days.

Pranavi moves up: Pranavi Urs carded 3-under 70 to rise up to the 30th place at the Joburg Ladies Open on the Ladies European Tour in Johannesburg. After 70-74 on the first two days, she had six birdies against three bogeys and reached 5-under for 54 holes and was placed a respectable T-30th.

Chand storms into final: India's Suraj Kumar Chand outplayed Hong Kong's Wailok To to enter the men's final of the HCL Squash PSA Challenger Tour in Chennai on Sunday. Second seed Chand won 11-8, 11-7, 11-6 in the men's semifinals played at the Indian Squash Academy. Chand will meet South Korean eighth seed Jeongmin Ryu in the final.

Messi scores brace: Lionel Messi recorded a brace and German Berterame added a tally on a header as Inter Miami earned a 3-2 win over the Colorado Rapids on Saturday in Denver.

Lakers win: Luke Kennard scored 27 points and LeBron James added 19 points with 13 assists as the short-handed Los Angeles Lakers earned a 107-98 victory over Houston Rockets on Saturday in Game 1 of a Western Conference first-round playoff series.

Athletics meet in Tumkur: Athletes aiming to earn a ticket to next month's Asian U20 Championships in Hong Kong will have to achieve the AFI qualification standards during the three-day age group competition in Tumkur, Karnataka, from April 24 to 26. The country's top athletes are expected to compete in the National Junior Athletics Federation Competition.

Nandi Hills Run on Aug 9: The second edition of the DivyaSree Nandi Hills Monsoon Run will be held on Aug 9, 2026. The organisers are hopeful of participation from over 6,000 runners. The run will feature the hill's unique terrain, with the Department of Youth Empowerment and Sports (DYES) backing the event as part of a broader initiative to promote fitness, sports tourism, and sustainable mass participation.

LONDON BRIDGE IS FALLING DOWN

Arsenal's Bid To Break 22-Year EPL Drought Unravels

As City Close Gap To 3 Points With A Game In Hand

Reuters

ERLING HAALAND (R) SCORED THE WINNER

Manchester: Manchester City beat stumbling Arsenal 2-1 on Sunday to take charge of the Premier League title race as Liverpool strengthened their push for a Champions League place.

Mikel Arteta's Gunners have been in pole position for months but are wobbling at the worst time as they seek to win the English title for the first time in 22 years.

Erling Haaland was City's match-winner, netting in the 65th minute after Rayan Cherki's superb opener was cancelled out by Kai Havertz, who took advantage of a huge mistake by City goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma.

Arteta was on his knees in the closing minutes as Havertz headed over the bar when presented with a golden chance to equalise.

The result in front of City's jubilant fans means that if Pep Guardiola's City win their match at Burnley in midweek, they would be top of the table.

The are now in pole position to win their seventh Premier League title in nine seasons, while Arsenal face the agony of finishing second for the fourth straight season.

Earlier, Virgil van Dijk scored a last-gasp winner in the Merseyside derby.

Just a few weeks ago the battle for the top five, which guarantees entry into the Champions League, looked as though it might be tight. But fifth-placed Liverpool's 2-1 victory in their first match at Everton's new Hill Dickinson Stadium took them seven points clear of stumbling Chelsea, in sixth spot. Mohamed Salah had opened the scoring for last season's champions.

Fourth-placed Aston Villa squandered a two-goal lead against Sunderland but scored in stoppage time to win 4-3. Ollie Watkins scored twice for Villa, who moved level on 58 points with third-placed Manchester United, three clear of Liverpool. AFP

EPL: THE RACE IS ON

Team	P	GD	Pts
Arsenal	33	+37	70
Man City	32	+36	67

Sociedad bask in Cup glory, agony for Atleti

Seville: Diego Simeone tried to convey hope but his body language spoke for itself.

The Argentine coach left Seville crumpled, wounded, by his team's Copa del Rey final defeat on Saturday by Real Sociedad, decided by the cruelty of penalties.

Simeone led Atletico to the Spanish cup back in 2013, an eternity ago, and winning it again would have been the perfect springboard to send the club flying into the Champions League semifinals clash with Arsenal.

"The way we competed makes me calm," said the coach, but it will take effort to get his players in the right place mentally to take on Arsenal, with the first leg in the Spanish capital on April 29.

Real Sociedad's players, many of them who came through the club's youth system, were overjoyed. "I've never walked on water but it has to be like this," said Real Sociedad striker Mikel Oyarzabal, who scored a penalty to put his team 2-1 up before half-time. "After this my career is complete and I can die happy."

Pablo Marin converted the decisive penalty in the shoot-out. "I tried to leave my mind blank, calm and serene," he said. "To be able to live through this with these wonderful people is incredible." AFP

Getty Images

COPA DEL REY

Mikel Oyarzabal honours slained Sociedad fan Aitor Zabaleta by placing a kit with his name on the Cup

ZABALETA'S STORY

Sociedad fan Aitor Zabaleta tragically lost his life at a bar in Madrid while trying to protect his girlfriend from rival Atletico fans in 1998 before a UEFA Cup match.

1 Real Sociedad coach Pellegrino Matarazzo is the first American coach to claim a major trophy with a club from Europe's top five leagues. The 48-year-old studied mathematics at Columbia and grew up watching Diego Maradona play for Napoli.

Bayern celebrate in style

Seal Title With 4 Games To Spare

Munich: Treble-chasing Bayern Munich secured their 35th German league title on Sunday after beating VfB Stuttgart 4-2 to open up an unassailable lead with four games to play. **Sunday's result sent Bayern 15 points clear** of second-placed Borussia Dortmund.

The Bavarians, who face Bayer Leverkusen in the German Cup semifinal next week before taking on PSG in their Champions League semifinal on April 28, were a goal down before scoring four times to quickly turn the game around. "It's been a fantastic season for us," said Bundesliga leading scorer Harry Kane, who was also on target on Sunday.

Bayern have been dominant once more in the Bundesliga this season, shattering the all-time league record for goals scored in one campaign (101), having already netted 109 times with four matches remaining. AFP

AP

BAYERN PLAYERS CELEBRATE WITH FANS

13 Bundesliga titles won by Bayern in last 14 years. They missed the crown in 2023/24, when Leverkusen finished on top.

32 Goals scored by Harry Kane, the top scorer in Bundesliga so far this season.

Rabiot fires Milan to verge of Champions League return

Milan: Adrien Rabiot boosted AC Milan's bid to return to the Champions League with the only goal in Sunday's 1-0 win at Verona, which moved his team back up to second in Serie A.

France midfielder Rabiot swept home the only goal in the 41st minute at the Stadio Marcantonio Bentegodi to give Milan an eight-point cushion on Como and Roma in fifth and sixth. The 31-year-old calmly netted his sixth league goal of the season. AFP

FIFA's 'daylight offside' goal experiment starts in Canada

A goal scored under the experimental "daylight" offside rule was allowed for the first time in a professional match on Saturday, with Pacific FC forward Alejandro Diaz on target in a 2-2 draw with Halifax Wanderers in the Canadian Premier League. Under the system, an attacker is only deemed offside if there is clear "daylight" between them and the second-last defender, rather than being penalised for narrowly being ahead. The concept is being assessed in Canada by FIFA. REUTERS

Seasoned Kadur tops podium

Bengaluru's ace **Karna Kadur**, along with co-driver Kumar Ramaswamy (Coimbatore) of Arka Motorsports survived a turbo failure and surged to victory in the South India Rally, organised by the Madras Motor Sports Club on Sunday, even as his arch-rival Gaurav Gill retired with a mechanical problem.

The 37-year-old Kadur's pace through the weekend was literally as hot as the weather, as he blitzed the combined FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship and the FMSCI Indian National Rally Championship grids.

In the INRC overall segment, the top three finishers, besides Kadur, were from Bengaluru as Ritesh Guttedar and Suraj M (AART Motorsports) finished second ahead of Arvind Dheerendra and Shahid Salman (Duran Racing). Ritesh topped the INRC 2 class. Bengaluru's Arvind Dheerendra and co-driver Shahid Salman marked their Duran Racing team's debut by winning the INRC 3 class. **Results (Winners only): Provisional classification: Asia-Pacific Rally Championship:** 1. Karna Kadur/ Kumar Ramaswamy (1hr, 59mins, 55.5secs); **Indian National Rally Championship: INRC Overall:** Karna Kadur / Kumar Ramaswamy (1:59:55.5); **INRC 2:** Ritesh Guttedar / Suraj M (2:04:27.4); INRC 3: Arvind Dheerendra / Shahid Salman (2:04:29.2); INRC 3T: Vishakh Balachandran / Chiranth Jain (2:05:43.6); **Ladies:** Tarushi Vikram / Athreya Kousgi (2:06:46.1); **Junior INRC:** Tarushi Vikram / Athreya Kousgi (2:06:46.1); **Masters Cup:** Pradeep Ravi / Thimmu Uddapanda; Classic Cup: Sreejesh MP/ Naushad KM (2:38:28.7). TNN

Dominant Shelton wins fifth ATP title

Second seed Ben Shelton won the ATP 500 clay court tournament in Munich for the first time wth a 6-2, 7-5 victory over the Italian Flavio Cobolli who had such an impressive win over Alexander Zverev in the semis.

One year after losing in the final to Zverev, world No. 6 Shelton claimed the fifth ATP title of his career and his second of the season after Dallas, on hard court. Shelton, who won an ATP 250-level clay-court tournament clay in Houston in 2024, also became the first American man since Andre Agassi at the Rome Masters 1000 in 2002 to win a tournament on the surface at a higher level.

FILS PREVAILS

Frenchman Arthur Fils beat Russia's higher-ranked Andrey Rublev 6-2, 7-6(2) to win the Barcelona Open, clinching his first title since 2024.

TENNIS ROUND-UP

RYBAKINA WEARS CROWN

Australian Open champion Elena Rybakina picked up her second title of the year as she outclassed Karolina Muchova 7-5, 6-1 to win the WTA Stuttgart indoor clay court tournament. Top seed Rybakina, 26, snatched a tight opening set with two breaks against her seventh-seeded Czech opponent after 53 minutes on court in Germany. The Kazakh never looked back in the second set rushing to a 5-0 lead as Muchova struggled with her serve, sealing victory and the 13th title of her career after 1hr 18 min.

KOSTYUK TRIUMPHS

Top seed Marta Kostyuk won an all-Ukrainian duel for the WTA title in Rouen with a straight sets win over Veronika Podrez. The 23-year-old Kostyuk won 6-3, 6-4 in the first WTA final between two Ukrainian players. AGENCIES

Reuters

CHAMPION: Ben Shelton poses with the trophy

Pratamesh bags gold

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New Delhi: Rising star Pratamesh Fuge beat Ojas Deotale in a dramatic shoot-off to win gold in the senior compound men's category at the National Ranking Archery Championship here. The contest lived up to expectations, as both archers were locked at 147-147 after regulation. In the shoot-off, each delivered a perfect 10, but Pratamesh's arrow landed closer to the bullseye, giving him the decisive advantage.

The familiarity built through years of training together was evident in the evenly-matched battle. "We know each other's game well, so I prepared accordingly," Pratamesh said. "I stayed calm in the crucial moments, and that made the difference." The win boosts his confidence as he eyes selection for upcoming international events, including the Asian Games.

In the senior compound women's final, Maya Bishnoi clinched gold after edging Avneet Kaur 143-142 in another tense finish. Maya maintained a slender lead in the closing ends to seal victory. Pathan Mahek Jankirhan took bronze.

ARCHERY

TIMES NATION

CBI said it got info in March about DGCA official's corruption

▶ Continued from page 1

The two were arrested in a bribery case of Rs 2.5 lakh. The money was seized and searches were conducted at the premises of the accused public servant and other private persons at four locations in Delhi, resulting in seizure of Rs 37 lakh cash, gold and silver coins and multiple digital devices, a CBI spokesperson said.

In its FIR, CBI said that it had received information in March that the DGCA official was allegedly engaged in corrupt and illegal activities, acting in connivance with various private entities in matters relating to the grant of approvals and permissions, in exchange for undue advantage. "On March 18, Bharat Mathur contacted Devula to enquire about the status of certain applications pertaining to the import of drones of M/s Asteria Aerospace Ltd. On March 20, Devula enquired from Mathur regarding the number of applications involved, to which Mathur confirmed that there were three applications concerning the firm," the FIR said. On April 17, Mathur visited the DGCA office in connection with the applications. The probe agency said it had been informed that Devula had also received undue advantage from several other firms which were under probe. CBI has also named a Bengaluru-based aerospace firm in the FIR.

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Modi outlines welfare schemes, promises ₹21k to pregnant women

▶ Continued from page 1

Trinamool has deceived Bengal's daughters, who wanted 33% reservation to be implemented from 2029. Modi tried to implement that. If women join the legislature in large numbers, they will speak for their rights. TMC thinks woman MLAs from villages and districts will make them accountable for their misdeeds, he said, adding the party "connived with Congress" to block amendments.

A brief stop at a jhalmuri shop in Jhargram during the campaign leg drew attention online as BJP pushed for a last-mile voter connect.

Modi outlined welfare promises, saying pregnant women would get Rs 21,000 and Rs 5,000 after childbirth, cervical cancer vaccination would be free, and medicines would be available at steep discounts through Jan Aushadhi outlets. He also spoke of an annual Rs 36,000 support for women, free treatment up to Rs 5 lakh and dialysis in govt hospitals.

Modi accused Trinamool of seeking religion-based reservation. "Muslims are being brought within the ambit of reservation for other backward classes. This is against the Constitution," he said. He also warned of "infiltration", saying Bengal risked losing its identity. "Trinamool's agenda is dangerous. It wants to establish a govt of infiltrators, which will protect religion and language of infiltrators," he said. On agriculture, Modi promised Rs 9,000 annual support to farmers, crop insurance and an end to "syndicate control" of cold storages, accusing Trinamool of exploiting potato and rice growers.

(Inputs from Sujoy Khanra in Midnapore)

PTI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi being garlanded during 'Vijay Sankalp rally' ahead of West Bengal assembly elections, in Purulia, Sunday

Didi cites higher share of women MPs in TMC

Kolkata: Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee called PM Narendra Modi's "address to the nation" on Saturday an election speech, challenging him over implementation of women's reservation law and BJP's record on fielding women candidates, **reports Suman Chakraborti.** At rallies Sunday across Hooghly and East Burdwan and a roadshow in Burdwan, the West Bengal chief minister said: "When was the women's bill passed? On Sept 25, 2023, we all supported it. It received more than 450 votes, yet why has it not been implemented to this day?" "Not 33%, but 37% of our MPs in Lok Sabha are women. In Rajya Sabha, 46% of our members are women. What is the percentage among your party MPs?," she said.

Ownership row over T-Wallet app; FIR filed

Hyderabad: A controversy has erupted over ownership of T-Wallet App, the official digital wallet of Telangana.

Electronic Service Delivery (ESD) wing of information technology, electronics & communication (ITE&C) has accused a private entity of dishonouring its contract and lodged a criminal complaint claiming that they are not being given access to T-Wallet app, despite the expiry of its contract. ESD alleged that there is a threat to 16 lakh registered users' data and Rs 14 crore funds.

Based on ESD complaint, a criminal case was registered by Central Crime Station (CCS) on Wednesday against Transaction Analysts India Pvt Ltd (TA-IPL) and others. The case was registered under Sections 316(2) (Criminal breach of trust), 318(4) (Cheating) of BNS and relevant section of the IT Act. TNN

4 spl teams formed to trace owner, associates

▶ Continued from page 1

Police registered a case and formed four special teams to trace the owner and associates, said SP N Srinatha.

Rescue and salvage faced a setback when a secondary, milder blast occurred around 7.20pm as debris was being cleared with an earthmover. Thirteen people, including fire service personnel and police, sustained minor injuries from flying debris.

Operations were briefly halted. Firecrackers and Matchbox Manufacturers Association district president PN Deva said the factory is permitted to employ 25 workers but had more on site. He said law requires chemical mixing between 8am and 10am, yet explosion occurred around 3pm, showing mixing continued all day.

CM MK Stalin said he had asked ministers to rush to the site to monitor rescue and support families. Condolences poured in from across political spectrum. Prime Minister Narendra Modi said: "The mishap in Virudhunagar district of Tamil Nadu is deeply distressing. I extend my condolences to those who have lost their loved ones. May the injured recover at the earliest." Vice president CP Radhakrishnan, Union home minister Amit Shah and Congress MP Rahul Gandhi also expressed grief.

Maharashtra NGO chief held for sexual abuse of staff

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Nagpur: Police arrested the president of an NGO after an FIR accused him of sexual abuse, religious coercion, defamation and cyberstalking of women working with his organisation in northwest Nagpur, officials said Sunday. Maharashtra anti-terrorist squad opened a parallel probe into the NGO's background, finances and possible links beyond its stated work with underprivileged children.

The case against Riyaz Fazil Qazi was registered at Mankapur police station around 10pm Saturday under multiple provisions of BNS, including section 74 (assault or criminal force to outrage modesty), sections 75(2), 78 (2), 296 (obscene acts), 302(1) for hurting religious sentiments, defamation under 356 (2), along with section 66-B of IT Act for unauthorised use of social media accounts to stalk women.

Primary complainant, a 23-year-old who worked as administration and HR head since Sept 2023, alleged that on her birthday, July 18, 2024, Qazi called her into his cabin after office celebrations, hugged her against her will, kissed her forehead and told her: "I don't want to leave you today." She said fear of losing her job stopped her from resisting. FIR describes repeated attempts to hug her and an episode where he allegedly unplugged CCTV cameras before trying to embrace her.

It accuses him of touching her when she was alone, gathering personal information about her, and turning hostile after she objected. Her elder sister, who joined in Nov 2025, was allegedly pressured to recite prayers of a particular religion during field visits, wear full-body clothing and follow specific practices despite belonging to another faith. She quit within two months. Other staff, including a 24-year-old teacher, also left citing alleged leering and attempts to impose religious customs.

Aniruddhasingh Dinore

The court granted accused NGO head Riyaz Fazil Qazi police custody till April 23

US national supposed to fly out from Srinagar

▶ Continued from page 1

Visiting US national Jeffrey Scott and his travel companion Haldar Koushik, an Indian-origin naturalised US citizen who has worked with the US govt, reached Kashmir via Delhi and were supposed to fly out from Srinagar to Kathmandu, via Delhi.

"Scott, unaware of the ban on satellite phones in India, had carried the device from the US for use as a navigational tool for trekking trips in both J&K and Nepal. A background check by multiple agencies, including RAW, cleared him after it did not find any malicious intent on his part," a source told TOI. An officer said Scott, who hails from Montana, was neither detained nor arrested. No FIR was registered against him either. "The phone he was carrying is not really a satellite phone like Garmin or Thuraya. After a thorough background check found him in the clear, he was allowed to fly out," the source added. A central govt official said while India has banned unauthorised possession or use of satellite phones in India, the ban may not have been adequately publicised or communicated among foreign travellers.

TODAY'S FACE-OFF
GT vs MI
TV TIME 7:30 PM STAR SPORTS / JIOHOTSTAR

PLAYED 8

Won by GT 5 (62.5%) | Won by MI 3 (37.5%)

LAST FIVE MATCHES
GT W W W L L
MI L L L L W

VENUE: AHMEDABAD

ODDS
GT 11/10 | MI 8/10

IPL 2026

"I'VE BEEN IN DIFFICULT SITUATIONS, AND YOU HAVE TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY AND BE MATURE ABOUT IT. YOU CAN'T JUST TEE OFF. THAT'S NOT HOW THE GAME WORKS. WE GET PAID TO DO THE JOB. I KNOW THERE'S BEEN A LOT SAID ABOUT MY STRIKE-RATE THIS SEASON. I DON'T CARE ABOUT STRIKE-RATES."
—Heinrich Klaasen | SRH batter

SOMEBODY, STOP THEM

Arya, Connolly Tear Apart LSG Bowling As PBKS Post 254/7 In 54-Run Win

AFP

DEADLY DUO: Cooper Connolly (left) and Priyansh Arya added 182 for the second wicket in 13.2 overs

254-7 Punjab Kings have registered their second total of 250+ in the IPL - their highest being 262 for two vs KKR at Eden Gardens, Kolkata on April 26, 2024.

21 Number of sixes hit in Punjab's innings — their second highest tally in the IPL behind the 24 (an all-time record) vs KKR at Eden Gardens, Kolkata on April 26, 2024.

1 Priyansh is the first Punjab batter to hit three fifties off less than 20 balls in the IPL - 16 balls vs SRH on April 11, 2026; 19 balls vs CSK on April 7, 2025 and 19 balls vs LSG on April 19, 2026 — all three at New Chandigarh.

248.23 Strike rate of Priyansh while amassing 211 runs in five innings, at an average of 42.20 — the highest among the 15 batters with 200 runs or more in this IPL.

32 Runs conceded by Aiden Markram are the most by a LSG bowler in an over in the IPL. Ravi Bishnoi had gone for 27 runs against RCB in 2022. Will O'Rourke too conceded 22 vs RCB in 2025.

Arani.Basu@timesofindia.com

New Chandigarh: Punjab Kings possess perhaps the most fearsome top order in the IPL, comprising three genial but fearless young batters. On Sunday, Priyansh Arya and Cooper Connolly carried out a brutal assault on Lucknow Super Giants with elegance — a second-wicket partnership of effortless hitting, yielding 182 runs off just 80 balls to set up a score of 254/7 and a 54-run win.

A carnage of this nature and magnitude is usually driven by muscular hitting which shatters the confidence of the bowling team. Arya's 37-ball 93 and Cannolly's 46-ball 87 slit the spirit of the LSG bowling like a hot knife gliding through a block of butter.

Later, it didn't even matter if Punjab Kings put out a subpar fielding effort. It was always going to be tough for LSG batters to recover from the massacre. Their forceful batting, led by Rishabh Pant's 23-ball 43 and Aiden Markram's 22-ball 42, did see them finish with a decent score of 200/5 but they had fallen too far behind in the first half of the match.

Arya and Connolly have shown that scoring at a manic run-rate doesn't necessarily require brute force. It could be done with languid elegance, depending more on optimum timing. They took touch play to another level. Each of Arya's nine sixes didn't have an exaggerated bat swing. In comparison, Connolly's seven hits beyond the boundary carried a bit more pronounced follow through of the bat. The ball looked to be floating into the stands off their bats. They ditched the quintessential flamboyance of T20 batting and relied on finesse. And just like that Arya has quietly flown under the radar to compete with other Indian marauding left-handed openers like Abhishek Sharma, Yashasvi Jaiswal and Vaibhav Sooryavanshi.

They may know the conditions at their home venue too well. The pitch was undeniably flat. Yet, the authority and confidence in their nonchalant ball-striking was spellbinding, even for someone with the experience and skill of Mohammed Shami. Once Shami's impeccable out-swinger dismissed opener Prabhsimran Singh for naught at first slip off the third ball of the match, it seemed the LSG bowlers were doing well enough to not let Punjab Kings run away with the match in Powerplay. Connolly struggled for timing and even survived an LBW shout. Arya was unaffected by anything that was happening at the other end. They ended the Powerplay at 63/1.

Punjab Kings have built a reputation of killing games in the first six overs of the innings. They went the other way on Sunday. Connolly gave up trying to hit the ball hard and followed what Arya was doing.

Perhaps, they know the conditions here too well, but they also are evidently in ominous form in this tournament. Arya made batting look so easy that one thought all he needed to do was just put bat on ball. Before one could realise, the duo had brought up the team's 150 in just 12.1 overs. Avesh Khan, Mohsin Khan and Aiden Markram appeared resigned to the onslaught. Even Shami looked out of place and ideas. Only Prince Yadav held his own and finished his spell with figures of 2/25, his spell an anomaly in the innings.

The brute power only came with Marcus Stoinis coming out after Arya and Connolly were dismissed in the space of two runs. His unbeaten 29 off 16 had sixes that could have seriously injured people in the stands. But he did kill LSG's hopes of restricting Punjab Kings under 240 after the rare failure of Shreyas Iyer.

HOW THEY STAND

TEAM	M	W	L	NR	NRR	P
PBKS	6	5	0	1	1.420	11
RCB	6	4	2	0	1.171	8
RR	6	4	2	0	0.889	8
SRH	6	3	3	0	0.566	6
DC	5	3	2	0	0.310	6
GT	5	3	2	0	0.018	6
CSK	6	2	4	0	-0.780	4
LSG	6	2	4	0	-1.173	4
KKR	7	1	5	1	-0.879	3
MI	5	1	4	0	-1.076	2

*Updated till PBKS vs LSG match

SCOREBOARD

PBKS: P Arya c Marsh b Siddharth 93, P Singh c Marsh b Shami 0, C Connolly c Siddharth b Yadav 87, S Iyer c Shami b Khan 5, M Stoinis run out (Pooran) 29, N Wadhera c Pooran b Siddharth 13, S Singh c Markram b Yadav 17, M Jansen not out 1. **Extras:** (LB-3, W-6) 9 **Total:** (For 7 wkts, 20 Overs) 254
Fall-of-wickets: 1-3, 2-185, 3-187, 4-193, 5-208, 6-252, 7-254.
Bowling: M Shami 4-0-56-1, M Khan 4-0-43-1, P Yadav 4-0-25-2, A Badoni 1-0-14-0, A Khan 3-0-46-0, M Siddharth 3-0-35-2, A Markram 1-0-32-0.
LSG: M Marsh c Bartlett b Chahal 40, A Badoni c Bartlett b Vyashak 35, R Pant c Prabhsimran b Arshdeep 43, N Pooran c Iyer b Jansen 9, A Markram c Stoinis b Jansen 42, M Choudhary not out 21, H Singh not out 1. **Extras:** (LB-2, NB-1, W-6) 9.
Total: (For 5 wkts, 20 Overs) 200
Fall-of-wickets: 1-61, 2-109, 3-128, 4-139, 5-199.
Bowling: A Singh 4-0-41-1, X Bartlett 4-0-54-0, M Jansen 4-0-37-2, V Vyashak 4-0-30-1, Y Chahal 4-0-36-1.
Result: PBKS won by 54 runs.
Player-of-the-Match: P Arya

PTI

THE BIG FISH: KKR spinner Varun Chakravarthy exults after dismissing RR skipper Riyan Parag

A revival of form and fortune for Varun, Rinku and Kolkata

KKR End Winless Run, Beat Royals By Four Wickets

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Kolkata: Kolkata Knight Riders finally snapped their winless run in the ongoing IPL, edging past Rajasthan Royals by four wickets in a tense contest at Eden Gardens on Sunday. A sharp bowling effort, led by Varun Chakravarthy's excellent 3 for 14, and well supported by Kartik Tyagi (3 for 22) and Sunil Narine (2 for 26), laid the platform for KKR to chase down Royals' modest 155, though not without late nerves.

KKR's batting once again flirted with collapse. Openers Tim Seifert and Ajinkya Rahane fell for ducks — Rahane's second in as many matches — while the middle-order continued to stutter. Cameron Green briefly threatened to steady the innings before his charge was halted by a sharp stumping, leaving the hosts playing catch-up yet again.

At 70/5, and staring at another disappointment, KKR found rescue from an unlikely alliance.

Rinku Singh, who survived a simple early reprieve on eight, anchored the innings with an unbeaten 53, while Anukul Roy provided the late acceleration with a gutsy 29 not out. Their unbroken 76-run stand off 37 balls turned the match on its head when KKR were clearly staring down the barrel.

Earlier, on a surface offering just enough assistance, KKR would have been satisfied after restricting Royals to a below-par total. Though the visitors negotiated the Powerplay without loss, their 62 for no wicket was modest by their own lofty standards.

Much of that was down to Narine's early intervention. Introduced inside the first six overs as Vaibhav Sooryavanshi and Yashasvi Jaiswal looked to break free, the Trinidadian not only checked the scoring rate but forced caution into an otherwise aggressive opening pair.

Teenage sensation Sooryavanshi still emerged as Royals' top scorer with a composed 46, an innings that stood out for its maturity more than fireworks. On a day demanding patience, the 15-year-old blended restraint with aggression, an unusual but impressive adjustment. His eventual dismissal — attempting a big heave off Varun — did little to detract from a knock that suggested growing game awareness.

The day, however, belonged to Varun.

It isn't often that Varun's celebrations grab attention, but his animated response after dismissing Royals skipper Riyan Parag, a jump, a clenched fist, a raw scream, stood out. It was his third wicket in his fourth over, and the release of emotion hinted at pressure shed after a quiet spell since the latter stages of the T20 World Cup.

If Varun set it up, Kartik Tyagi finished it off. The pacer produced a decisive penultimate over, claiming three wickets in the 19th to derail any hope of a Royals late surge.For KKR, it was a much-needed win on a difficult road, a silver lining amid an otherwise dark horizon.

Brief scores: Rajasthan Royals 155/ 9 in 20 overs (Jaiswal 39, Sooryavanshi 46; Chakaravarthy 3-14, Tyagi 3-22, Narine 2-26) lost to **Kolkata Knight Riders 161 for 6 in 19.4 overs** (Rinku 53n.o; R Jadeja 2-8).

4 Rinku Singh's innings is the fourth highest by a KKR batter at number six or below in a successful chase in the IPL. Andre Russell has recorded the three fifty-plus knocks — all three vs Punjab - 70 not out at Wankhede Stadium, Mumbai on April 1, 2022; 66 at Pune on April 18, 2015 & 51 at Eden Gardens, Kolkata on May 9, 2015.

WEATHER
34°C

NUMBERS GAME

4 Gujarat Titans have won all four matches vs Mumbai Indians at Motera, Ahmedabad — by 55 runs on April 25; by 62 runs on May 26 (both in 2023), by six runs on March 24, 2024 and by 36 runs on March 29, 2025.

103 An unbeaten knock off 49 balls played by Suryakumar Yadav at Wankhede Stadium, Mumbai on May 12, 2023 remains the only hundred for Mumbai Indians vs Gujarat Titans in the IPL.

129 Shubman Gill's match-winning knock off 60 balls vs Mumbai Indians at Ahmedabad on May 26, 2023 remains the highest individual score for Gujarat Titans against any opponent.

—Stats: Rajesh Kumar

MI look to break Motera jinx and get back into contention

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Ahmedabad: With just one win from five matches, Mumbai Indians find themselves in early must-win territory as they take on Gujarat Titans at the Narendra Modi Stadium on Monday. Rooted to the bottom of the table, MI can ill afford another slip, especially against opponents they have never beaten at this venue.

The challenge is formidable. Gujarat Titans have turned Ahmedabad into a stronghold, while Mumbai's own campaign has been marked by inconsistency — most notably with the ball. The new-ball pair of Deepak Chahar and Trent Boult has struggled for penetration, often conceding runs without breakthroughs. Even Jasprit Bumrah has looked short of his usual rhythm, leaving MI without the control they are accustomed to.

Shardul Thakur leads the wicket charts for MI with six scalps, but his economy rate of 13.57 underlines the trade-off. Spin has offered control without menace. Mitchell Santner, who missed the previous match against Punjab Kings due to illness, has been economical, while Afghan off-spinner Allah Ghazanfar has picked up wickets but leaked runs.

Batting has been similarly uneven. Quinton de Kock's superb century against PBKS — after replacing the injured Rohit Sharma — was a major positive, yet MI still lacked momentum at the death. The inability of the middle and lower order to collectively finish innings has been a recurring theme they must address.

Gujarat Titans, meanwhile, boast one of the strongest bowling attacks in the league. Mohammad Siraj and Kagiso Rabada form a potent new-ball pairing, supported by Prasidh Krishna and Ashok Sharma, who thrive on pace and hard lengths. Rashid Khan's leg-spin continues to apply pressure through the middle overs.

Titans' captain Shubman Gill, despite a last-over win against Kolkata Knight Riders, admitted that he would have liked to finish the chase earlier — exposing some concern around the middle order, which has leaned heavily on Gill, B Sai Sudharsan and Jos Buttler.

There is added intrigue with Hardik Pandya returning to the stadium where he led GT to their first IPL title in 2022. The noise around his move back to MI has eased, but his form with the bat remains a concern. A return to rhythm would greatly aid MI's effort to revive their campaign. On a ground where history is stacked against them, urgency has arrived early.

Mhatre's injury, a blow for CSK

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Hyderabad: Chennai Super Kings made a blistering start in their chase of Sunrisers Hyderabad's 194/9 despite losing opener Sanju Samson in the second over, riding an explosive cameo from teenager Ayush Mhatre.
Dropped before opening his account, the 18-year-old made SRH pay, smashing Praful Hinge for 24 runs in the third over and racing to 30 off 13 balls (five fours, one six) as CSK surged to 60/1 in four overs.

However, Mhatre pulled up while attempting a double and was in visible discomfort after picking up a hamstring injury. His restricted movement was evident, and he fell two balls later. The setback proved decisive, swinging momentum SRH's way as they went on to win by 10 runs. The injury, suspected to be a hamstring tear, could sideline Mhatre for weeks, compounding CSK's woes after Khaleel Ahmed's recent injury. Batting coach Mike Hussey termed it "a big loss," adding that Mhatre had been "in nice touch."

Saw more tears today than when we won IPL: Chakravarthy

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Kolkata: The pressure was building up for Kolkata Knight Riders after six winless matches and the significance of Sunday's victory wasn't lost on Varun Chakravarthy.

"I saw more tears in the dressing room today than after we had won the tournament (in 2024)," the spinner said.

"This win has a huge significance for us."

It kept them alive in the tournament, even though the road ahead is extremely difficult.

It was a significant day for Varun too, as he announced his return to form with figures of three-for 14. However, he doesn't want to make much of it. "The wicket was helping us a little and when that happens, the bowler will tend to attack," he said.

In fact, he did not find anything wrong with his bowling in the preceding two months when he was giving away far too many runs. "It is all about the kind of wickets you get," he said.

"I'm very tough on myself. If I don't do well, I go and pinpoint what is not there. But the pitches were such that there was nothing for the spinners. If you see other spinners also, it was the same condition for everyone. So yeah, it's nice that there's something for the spinners now (at the Eden)."

However, he did agree that despite the slowness of the Eden Gardens wicket on Sunday, 190 was par for the course. Rajasthan Royals batting coach Vikram Rathore agreed with Varun.

"We were at least 20 runs short," Rathore, also a former India batting coach, said.

He rued left-arm-seamer Nandre Burger's missed catch off Rinku Singh when the batter was on eight, which proved to be the decisive moment, but added that it was part of the game. "Yes, it made the difference, but these things do happen."

'Find joy in every little success and don't listen to the outside noise'

Missy Franklin Reflects On Glory, Pressure And Life After The Pool

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Madrid: The sun cast a warm glow over Madrid's Palacio de Cibeles as the weekend crowd gathered outside one of the city's most iconic squares, hoping to catch a glimpse of sporting greatness. Among the stars arriving for the Laureus World Sports Awards

TOI EXCLUSIVE

was Missy Franklin — the once-unstoppable teenage sensation who took the swimming world by storm at the 2012 London Olympics.

Now the youngest Laureus Academy member and winner, Missy sat down to reflect on a career that soared to unimaginable heights before public scrutiny and mounting burden of expectations brought a "heartbroken and devastated" end to the legendary American swimmer.

Getty Images

AQUA FORCE: Missy Franklin

At just 17, Missy became a household name at London, winning five medals, including four gold. Her dominance in the pool earned her the nickname "Missy the Missile." A year later, she made history again by becoming the first female swimmer to win six gold medals at a single World Championship. It seemed like the beginning of an era.

"Those were incredible moments, no doubt," said Missy, her tone both nostalgic and measured. "But when you reach that kind of high so young, it's hard to understand what comes next," she told **TOI** in an interview.

By her own admission, that "next" proved far more complicated than anyone expected. At the 2016 Rio Olympics, she struggled under the weight of expectations. Despite winning a gold in the 4x200m freestyle relay, she fell short in her individual events. "Rio was devastating for me," she admitted, "I was only 21, still figuring out who I was, and suddenly everything felt magnified. Every race, every mistake — it all felt so public and scrutinised."

Missy pointed to one key factor that amplified the pressure: listening to the outside noise. "I made that mistake. I was navigating opinions, expectations, and constant scrutiny. It's something so many athletes deal with now. But I couldn't."

The emotional toll was immense. By 23, Missy made the difficult decision to retire in 2018, a choice she described as "heartbreaking".

Yet, in that pain, Missy found a new purpose. In the years since her retirement, she became an outspoken advocate for mental health. "The biggest lesson I learnt was that joy has to come first. Not the medals, not the recognition — just the pure love of what you do. Every success matters and we as athletes need to enjoy them," she said. Today, Missy encourages athletes to focus less on outcomes and more on the journey. "We celebrate big moments, but it's the small ones that truly stay with you — the early mornings, the laughs with teammates, the quiet victories no one else sees. Those are the moments that shape you, moments that last," she said with a smile.

Her advice remains simple: turn out the outside noise and hold onto joy. "When you are young, it's easy to get caught up in where you are going. But every single day is an opportunity to grow, learn and enjoy. Don't take that for granted."

(The correspondent is in Madrid as guest of Laureus World Sports Awards)

Djokovic, Eileen to co-host LWSA

Tennis legend Novak Djokovic and multiple Olympic and world champion skier Eileen Gu will co-host this year's Laureus World Sports Awards (LWSA), to be held at Madrid's Palacio de Cibeles on Monday. Never before have two athletes hosted the awards show.

Chief selector Agarkar's contract renewed for a year

New Delhi: Ajit Agarkar will continue as chairman of the senior selection committee after the BCCI decided to renew his contract for one more year, keeping an eye on the 2027 ODI World Cup.

Under Agarkar's chairmanship, the selected Indian teams between Oct 2023 to Mar 2026 reached four ICC tournament finals, winning three of them — two T20 World Cups and one ICC Champions Trophy — and it was a foregone conclusion that his contract will be renewed for fourth year.

"A selector can continue up to four years in either junior or senior selection committee and five years cumulatively across both committees. Hence Ajit's contract is being renewed and not extended," a BCCI source said on Sunday.

Continuity ahead of the 50-over World Cup is one of the key factors behind the board's decision. PTI

Wolvaardt & Luus power SA past India

Durban: Laura Wolvaardt made a free-flowing 54 and Sune Luus complemented her skipper with a well-composed 57 as South Africa crushed India by 8 wickets in the second women's T20I here on Sunday.

WOMEN'S T20I

The match's script was written in clear letters once SA bowlers bundled out India for a below-par 147, and it was taken to its logical culmination by Wolvaardt and Luus who added 106 runs for the opening stand in just 12 overs.

The hosts made 148 for two in 17.1 overs. SA now lead the five-match series 2-0.

Earlier, opener Shafali Verma struck a typically aggressive 57 but rest of the Indian batters struggled against largely accurate South Africa bowlers, settling for a below par 147 all out. PTI

Brief scores: India: 147 all out in 20 overs (Shafali Verma 57; Chloe Tryon 3-22) **lost to South Africa: 148/2 in 17.1 overs** (Laura Wolvaardt 54, Sune Luus 57; Shreyanka Patil 2-35).

Rashid turned down citizenship offer from India

New Delhi: Afghanistan's Rashid Khan was informally sounded out by not one but two countries, including India, with offers of citizenship and the chance to represent them, but the cricketer declined, choosing instead to stay loyal to his homeland, a new book has revealed. In 'Rashid Khan: From Streets to Stardom', he tells that both India and Australia extended such offers, which he declined.

"I received such offers (citizenship and playing) from both Australia and India. But I told them, 'If I don't play for my country, I won't play for any other country either," Khan is quoted in the book. PTI

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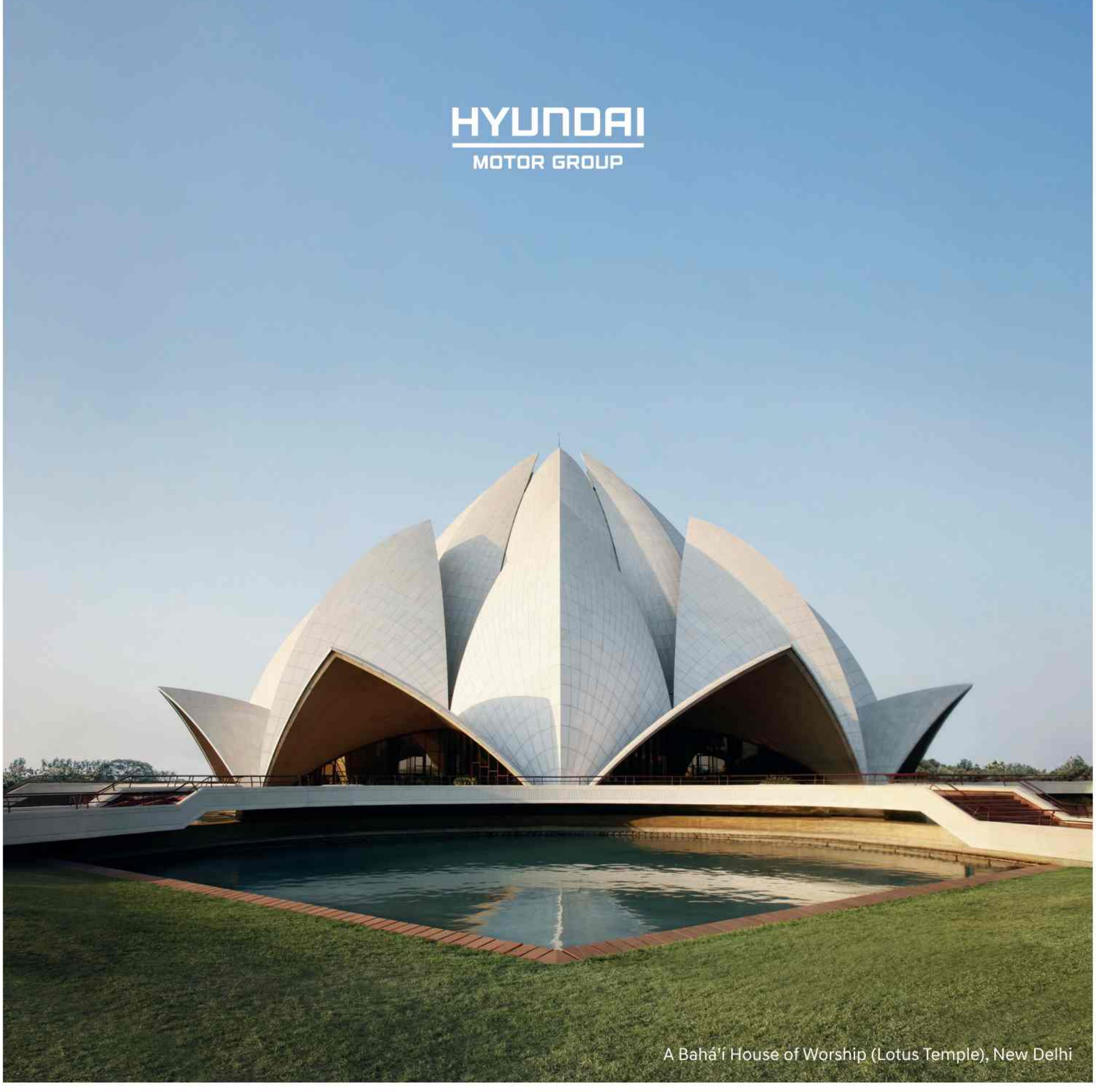

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Oz Open champion Elena Rybakina clinches her second title of the year as she outclasses Karolina Muchova to win the WTA Stuttgart indoor clay-court tournament, P 14

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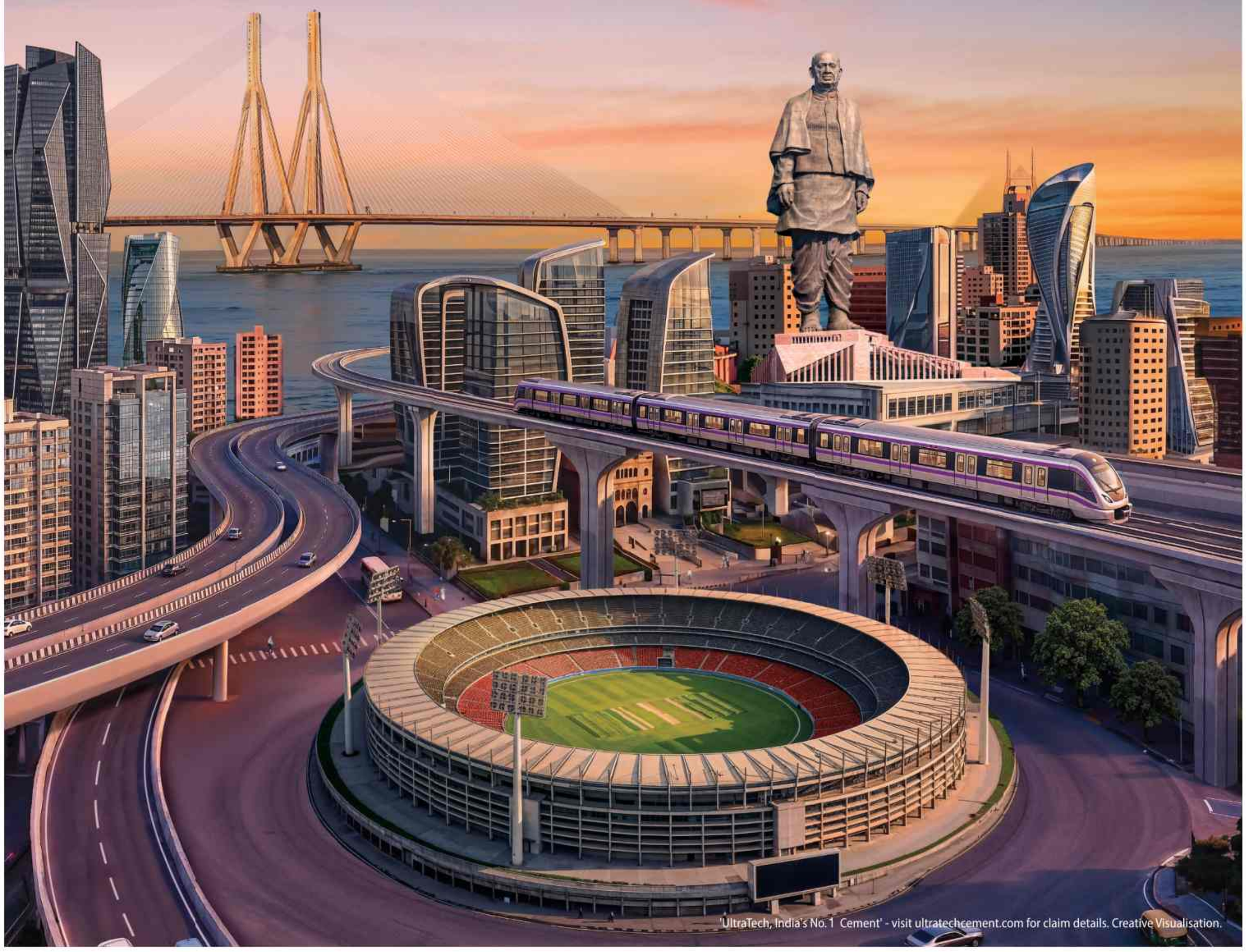

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